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Editor's LETTER



New logo, same great content

You will have noticed that we have a new masthead this month. Parent company Bonnier Corp in the USA wanted to ensure a clear separation between their SD title and their sister magazine Scuba Diving, and so we have followed suit to maintain a cohesive global image. Rest assured, within these pages, you will still find all the usual mixed bag of content, which this month includes the sinking (finally!) of a new diver attraction in the depths of Capernwray; up close and personal interactions with the rare dugongs of southern Egypt and the scintillating sailfish of Mexico; tantalising winter sun destinations in the form of Malta and Gozo and the Canary Islands; an insight into mine diving right here in the UK; and sage advice from PADI's Vikki Batten, who extols the virtues of taking your time to explore the exterior of a shipwreck rather than just heading for the nearest entry point inside. The Sport Diver Test Team also braved single-digit water temperatures to review budget-priced regulators, sidemount harnesses and dive computers. If all this grim UK weather is getting you down, why not cheer yourself up and have something exciting to aim for by joining our Bahama Bash on the Aqua Cat liveaboard in November? Myself and Sport Diver photojournalist extraordinaire Stuart Philpott are leading the trip, which will include several workshops focusing on all aspects of underwater photography, from entry-level hints and advice aimed at raw novices right up to more-advanced techniques for the more-accomplished.

The epic trip runs from 26 November to 3 December, starting and finishing in Nassau, and is priced at US\$2,995 per person. This includes seven nights accommodation, six days of diving (that's 26 dives in total!), port and park fees, airport transfers, all food and drink, and the photo workshops with me and Stuart. There are only 15 spaces left, so book now! Check out: www.aquacatcruises.com/sportdiveruk2016.

Mark Evans, EDITOR

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NEWS

Each month, we collate the latest industry news from right here in the UK, as well as all over our water planet. To find out the most up-to-date news and views, check out the website:

www.sportdiver.co.uk

NUPG reveals 'Best of 2015' images

The Northern Underwater Photography Group (NUPG) has held its Best of 2015, with members entering images from the UK and around the world. The images had to have been taken in 2015 and the competition was divided into several categories with ten awards being voted for by the audience on the night.

A diverse visual feast from beneath the seas, oceans, lakes and quarries of such high standards made for a difficult night of voting.

A wonderful array of images was received, with underwater shots of sharks, wrecks, seals, reef fish, sea slugs, divers, eels, jellyfish, corals and anemones. NUPG members seem to love diving in both UK waters and further afield as the competition had entries from England, Scotland, Wales, Indonesia, Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Philippines, Egypt, Lanzarote, South Africa and Mexico.

For more information about the NUPG, visit: www.nupg.org.uk





© Tony Gilbert

Open UK Close Up: Tony Gilbert with a shot of a lion's mane jellyfish



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Compact Overseas Wide Angle: Sue Spencer with a shot of a school of fish in the Red Sea, Egypt



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PADI legend Jack Lavanchy has died aged 87

Jack Lavanchy, co-founder and President Emeritus of PADI Europe, passed away on 27 January at age 87. One of the forerunners and pioneers of the European dive community, Lavanchy - with Jürg Beeli - was a primary force behind PADI's double-digit growth in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s.

A native of Switzerland, Lavanchy's interest in diving began when he saw people skin-diving off of Cannes, France, in 1947. He completed his first scuba course in 1952 and was active with Glaukos, Switzerland's oldest dive club, serving as vice-president, president, secretary and delegate to the Swiss Diving Federation. Lavanchy became an instructor in the early 1960s and, inspired by seeing Cousteau's *The Silent World*, became Switzerland's exclusive agent for the Spirotechnique scuba gear line in 1965, and Germany's in 1968.

In 1978, Lavanchy visited PADI in the United States and returned to Switzerland (and his business partner Jürg Beeli) with PADI training materials. Recognising the potential for PADI to improve diver training and promote industry growth in Europe, he and Beeli founded PADI European Services in 1983, followed by founding the PADI European College in 1984. In 1988, PADI European Services transitioned into PADI Europe, which was one of the forerunners of today's PADI EMEA.

Lavanchy served as PADI Europe's CEO and president in the 1980s and 1990s. Under his leadership, PADI experienced double-digit growth and grew into the region's leading and largest diver training organisation. In 1996, Lavanchy launched the Project AWARE Foundation in Europe, establishing a new growth base and diver participation for the organisation's marine preservation initiatives. Over his career, Lavanchy received numerous honours and titles, including: Historical Diving Society Advisory Board, International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame, Tauchen Lifetime Achievement Award and European Underwater Federation Honorary Vice President.



Injured turtle gets private jet home

An endangered turtle that was washed up on a beach in Jersey got some serious rock-star treatment - flying by private jet to the Canary Islands.

And continuing the celebrity theme, it turns out that the plane in which the loggerhead turtle - nicknamed Terri - took to the skies in is actually owned by Iron Maiden frontman Bruce Dickinson!

The stricken turtle, which was found on a beach in St Clement with shell damage and signs of infection, was being treated by vets in Jersey, but needed a warmer climate in which to be released back into the wild, hence the flight to Gran Canaria.

Vet Peter Haworth and other staff at New Era vets were dealing with Terri, and had been campaigning to send her safely on her way. Originally they planned to send the turtle by private jet to the Canary Islands at a cost of £22,000, and a public fundraising campaign had raised nearly £6,000 towards this figure, then Guernsey company Aeris Aviation offered to provide the jet at a reduced cost. The flight was also shorter, taking only five hours instead of the 12 originally stated.

Mr Howarth said: "A jet became available at a reduced price and with the donations at the hospital and online, we had reached the price we needed for the jet. "It shows how much one little turtle can bond people together. We had interest immediately from Dubai, Australia and America. "The sea life trust in the UK offered money if we needed it, which we hope to put towards a satellite tracker so people can follow Terri on her journey."

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RNLI releases 2015 stats

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) rescued 9,763 people in the UK and Ireland in 2015 - a year when volunteer lifeboat crew and lifeguards were kept busy by storms so bad they were given names.

RNLI volunteer lifeboat crews rescued 7,973 people whilst the charity's lifeguards rescued 1,790 people around UK and Irish coastal waters.

The charity's busiest lifeboat station was Tower lifeboat on the River Thames in London which launched 465 times assisting 90 people, and saving 15 lives**. Their neighbouring station, Chiswick, launched 227 times and rescued 135 people, saving 3 lives.

It was another busy year around the coast for the charity's volunteers - Southend-on-Sea Lifeboat Station was the RNLI's busiest coastal station, launching 142 times and assisting 120 people. The next busiest coastal stations were three in the South of England; Poole, Plymouth and Eastbourne, launching 99 times each and assisting 385 people between them.

Will Stephens, RNLI Head of Lifesaving said: "Our volunteer lifeboat crew and lifeguards have again worked exceptionally hard serving our local communities. We continue to urge those working or enjoying our coastline and inland areas to respect the water. We understand that things can go wrong from time to time, so some preventative maintenance and annual checks prior to the boating season should allow for worry free sea time.

"Inland, floods caused heartache for many at the end of 2015 and we ask those faced with floods to be aware of the fast flowing flood waters and to keep a safe distance.

"I would like to thank all of our volunteers, both on and off the water, for their tireless hard work and dedication over the last 12 months. Our lifesaving work depends on the support of our crews, fundraisers, education

teams and supporters. Without this we would not be able to operate."

The volunteer lifeboat crews carry pagers 24/7, never knowing what may lie ahead when the alarm is raised. The most common cause for lifeboat call out in 2015 was to boats with machinery failure, launching 1,492 times (18% of all launches).

Sailing pleasure craft accounted for 1,579 launches (19% of all launches) and power pleasure craft 1,464 (18%) of launches. 1,080 (13%) of calls were to reports of people in the water.

With over 15.5 million visitors to RNLI lifeguarded beaches in 2015, the charity's lifeguards helped over 18,000 people dealing with anything from stings, slips and trips to missing children, major first aid incidents, as well as rescues in the water.

Leesa Harwood, Community Lifesaving and Fundraising Director said: "It's humbling to see the lifesaving work of our volunteer crew, lifeguards, flood rescue teams and safety advisers - out of the 9,763 rescued, 442 people are alive today because of their actions. And now the RNLI as a whole owes it to them to act with integrity and tenacity as we take this step to opt-in communications from January 2017.

"So I'm appealing to all our dedicated supporters to help us by ticking our opt-in box over the next few months - to hear about our rescues, our safety advice, and our events and help us save the lives of hundreds more in the years to come.

"Look out for our future opt-in campaign, or if you want to opt in immediately call our Supporter Care team on 0300 300 9918 (uk) or 0044 1202 663234 (non-uk) weekdays between 8am-6pm or e-mail at optin@rnli.org.uk

For more information on the RNLI, please visit www.rnli.org.uk

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German U-boat found off Norfolk coast

The wreck of a World War One German U-boat missing since January 1915 has been found off the coast of East Anglia. Scans by windfarm developers showed the U-31 submarine, which struck a mine and sank with all hands, lying in 30m about 55 miles east of Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk. The scans turned up more than 60 wrecks over a two-year period, and while most of these were already identified, the discovery of the 58-metre U-boat was 'entirely unexpected', developers said.

Initially it was thought the wreckage might be a Dutch Navy submarine, missing since June 1940, however, after several dives, a team from Lamash North Sea Diving managed to obtain clear footage which allowed accurate identification of the much-earlier German submarine. U-31 was the first of 11 Type U-31 submarines to be commissioned by the Imperial German Navy between 1912 and 1915. Of these, three surrendered and eight sank, and the whereabouts of two of those that sank - including U-31 - was unknown, according to Historic England. "Relatives and descendants of those lost in the U-31 may now take some comfort in knowing the final resting place of the crew and the discovery serves as a poignant reminder of all those lost at sea, on land and in the air during the First World War," said a spokesman.

As an official military maritime grave, the wreck of U-31 will remain in its final resting place, and should plans for a windfarm in the area go ahead, developers have given assurances the site will not be disturbed.

SCUBAPRO and SUBGEAR to merge

JOHNSON OUTDOORS, parent company of SCUBAPRO and SUBGEAR, has announced that it is to concentrate on the SCUBAPRO brand. The move will see the existing SUBGEAR product range rebranded as SCUBAPRO.

A spokesperson for the company said: "[We] have decided to pool all strengths strategically and to concentrate the entire know-how on one brand - SCUBAPRO. "Almost all SUBGEAR products will survive - just under a new name: SCUBAPRO."

All legal guarantees on SUBGEAR products remain valid and SUBGEAR spare parts will remain available. For further information, contact an authorised SCUBAPRO dealer or visit www.scubapro.com



Egypt enhances airport security

Egypt has hired a security company to enhance the safety of its airports, it has been revealed.

Control Risks, a security firm with global recognition, has been contracted to improve airport security for visiting tourists. Officials hope the move will encourage holidaymakers to return to Egypt, with visitor numbers having recently slumped.

Egyptian Minister of Tourism, Hisham Zaazou, said: "We are committed to making sure that people from around the world have a safe, secure and enjoyable experience when visiting

Egypt. We are therefore delighted to confirm that a contract has been signed today by the Egyptian Government with the world-leading security company Control Risks.

"Control Risks' teams are already on the ground beginning their work, and building on the huge efforts undertaken by both the Egyptian Authorities and International Government security delegations.

"Ensuring safety and security for everyone travelling within our country, visiting our historic sites or enjoying our resorts is a top priority for the Egyptian government."

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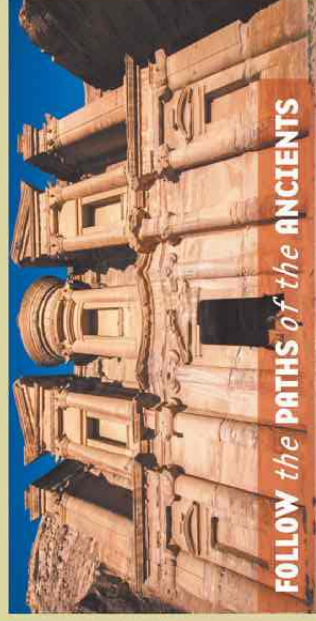
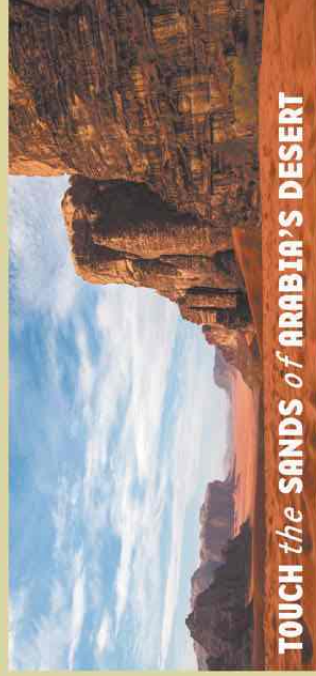
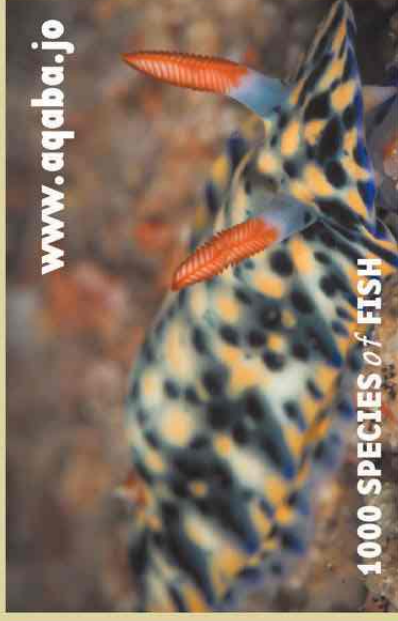
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Egypt increases security in key tourist resorts

The Egyptian government will introduce a series of new security measures to increase safety at key tourist resorts.

The announcement has been made by the government's Minister of Tourism, Hisham Zaazou, who revealed an extra 250m EGP (£22m) will be spent.

Proposed actions in the coming months include:

- The installation of additional CCTV systems in Sharm el Sheikh and Hurghada that will create comprehensive coverage of the resorts. These will be integrated with private CCTV systems in hotels to enhance Command and Control capabilities.
- The purchase and introduction of the latest scanning and detection equipment.
- Additional security personnel on patrol in

resorts.

- The introduction of significant numbers of additional sniffer dogs.

Mr Zaazou said: "Egypt has a long track record of enhancing security and seeking to ensure that our citizens and tourists visiting our country are safe and secure.

"These additional measures bring our tourist security to another level. However, we will not stop there. We constantly review our capabilities on a regular basis and will continue to do so.

"The security of visitors to Egypt remains our highest priority. I believe that these new measures will further add to the security of our resorts while not being intrusive to tourists so they can get on with enjoying their holidays."

Japan deports maker of 'The Cove'

Ric O'Barry, founder of Dolphin Project and star of the Oscar-winning documentary 'The Cove' has been deported from Japan.

Immigration officials cited his trip to Futo on August 27, 2015 as the official reason for his deportation, claiming he did not inform them of his travel plans.

Prior to his flight, O'Barry had been held for 19 days.

Takashi Takano, lawyer for Dolphin Project, said: "My client was detained at a jail-like facility of the Immigration Bureau at Narita Airport, Tokyo. During this time, he lost more than 10kg and suffered from a minor chest problem.

"With regards to the refusal of his entry into the country and the reason for his detention, the Bureau's explanation seems very obscure."

Dive operator offering free Bahamas flights



Dive Worldwide is offering divers the chance to book free internal flights to the Outer Islands on their next trip to the Bahamas. The offer is available to anyone booking a flight-inclusive holiday before 30 June 2016 with a minimum stay of four nights at one of three participating resorts.

The deal is available on holidays to Small Hope Bay Lodge, Andros, Stella Maris Resort, Long Island and Riding Rock Resort, San Salvador.

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Constellation Fleet frees manta from fishing line

The manager of Constellation Fleet's MV Virgo has disentangled and freed a manta ray caught in fishing line.

The incident, which took place during a 'Best of Maldives' itinerary comes shortly after the crew of sister ship MV Leo freed a hawksbill turtle from a loose net.

The most recent incident, which can be viewed on YouTube, shows Mohamed Nixam carefully cutting line from around the manta using a dive knife. The footage was captured by Canadian photographer Ron Katz.

For more information about Constellation Fleet, visit www.constellation-fleet.com

Caribbean Fun Travel expands destinations list

Caribbean Fun Travel, the UK travel specialist for the Caribbean, has expanded its destinations list for 2016.

In response to customer demand and an increase of 20% in bookings in 2015, the operator will soon be offering trips to St Lucia, Antigua, Barbados and the Bahamas.

Other islands set to be added include St Kitts, Turks and Caicos and Tobago.

Douglas Durrant, Managing Director of Caribbean Fun Travel, said: "Over the years we have introduced many UK divers to some 'off the beaten track' destinations. Now we will add some familiar, but equally exciting, destinations for divers and snorkelers to enjoy. "We have a lot of repeat customers and they have pushed us to add new destinations."

For more information about Caribbean Fun Travel, visit www.caribbeanfuntravel.co.uk



Emperor Divers unveils new 14-night 'Best of Maldives' itinerary



Emperor Divers has unveiled a new 14-night 'Best of Maldives' itinerary aboard Emperor Serenity.

The 14-night Best of Maldives covers iconic dive sites such as Male Atolls, Lhaviyani Atoll, Noonu, Raa and Baa Atolls, Rasdhoo Atoll and Ari Atolls.

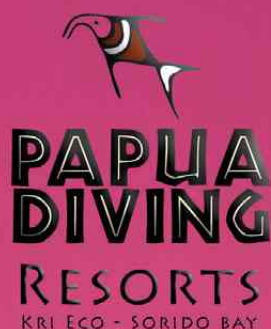
Combining top quality diving with the promise of 'bucket list' marine life sightings and the superb hotel-style of Emperor Serenity, the itinerary is destined to be a Maldives triumph. Sailing from Male, Emperor Divers Maldives' liveaboard, Emperor Serenity, brings a class of her own with contemporary styling and plenty of space where fine accommodation and service is standard. This 40-metre boat easily accommodates 26 guests in 13 well-appointed ensuite cabins all with air-con. Seven-night trips can also be arranged on the

same itinerary if the 14-night voyage is too long by using domestic flights to and from Male giving guests the choice of joining the outbound or return legs.

Included is full board, free Nitrox, around 37 dives (14-night trip), local transfers, a visit to a deserted island for a BBQ under the stars and the chance to dive with mantas, whalesharks, turtles and myriad marine life as well as a city tour with local guide.

All diving is done from Emperor Serenity's large dhoni tender, giving more living space on board and getting guests to the perfect dive spot every time. Four dive guides provide a premium service. Non-divers can enjoy get free snorkelling equipment and a \$50 voucher to spend on board.

For more information on Emperor Serenity, visit visitmaldives.emperordivers.com



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DIVE DOCTOR: Medical Q&A



Dr Oliver Firth has gained considerable experience in the field of diving and hyperbaric medicine since joining LDC in 2006. He is an Approved Medical Examiner of Divers for the UK HSE, and a medical referee for the UK Sport Diving Medical Committee. He is involved in the management of all types of diving-related illness, including recompression treatment, as well as providing hyperbaric oxygen therapy for non-diving conditions. He remains a passionate diver and has participated in various expeditions and conservation projects throughout the globe.

Q: Bit of an odd query, this... They say laughter keeps you young, but as I've been laughing a lot for six decades I have developed deep wrinkles and creases around my cheeks, forehead and eyes. Rather upsettingly they give me persistent leaks around my mask when diving. I've tried a couple of different brands but there's always an annoying trickle that gradually rises up in front of my eyes, requiring me to clear my mask on an increasingly frequent basis. It probably doesn't help that I've got a fearsome set of whiskers too. Any tips on how to stop this?

A: I urge you all to put down this magazine immediately, deploy your favourite web-browsing device and navigate to the Facebook page of the marvellously monikered Beard Liberation Front, a paean to the fine art of grooming and hirsutism. And you can ditch the Dive Show, there is only one place to be in October this year: the British Beard and Moustache Championships, due to be held in Liverpool, where abundant and extreme examples of the genre can be viewed in person, with categories including Musketeer, Fu Manchu and, worryingly, Women... To tide you over for now, I'd suggest a prominent and fulsome silicon skirt on your mask. This, coupled with judicious gobs of Vaseline or silicone grease in the areas that typically leak, should halt the ingress of water. If not, then it's probably worth trying a few other models (change sizes as well as brands) as there's no one-size-fits-all in the mask world. Overtightening is a common culprit – get your local dive shop to take you through correct sizing and fitting. While you're there, you could investigate purge masks, which allow water out through a one-way valve, thus easing the arduous task of constant mask clearing. Should all else fail, one solution remains: targetted depilation of the immediate under-nose area, which should permit a tight seal and avoid disrupting your commendable whiskerage to any noticeable degree.

Q: I've always wanted to try diving and am lucky enough to be going on a trip to the Dominican Republic very soon. However I have a few health issues, that stem from contracting hepatitis when I was much younger (I'm 65 now). My liver went into failure about six years ago and I ended up having a transplant. The operation was successful and I feel great but I have to take immunosuppressant medication (tacrolimus and prednisolone) for life, to prevent rejection. Will the drugs or the transplant (or anything else) stop me from giving diving a go, do you think? I would so love to try it!

A: Glad to hear the operation was a success. Following recovery from liver surgery there shouldn't be any need to worry about the organ itself – it has amazing recuperative powers. It's becoming more and more common to see patients on lifelong immunosuppression for a variety of conditions, but they do pose some risks to divers. They can increase the risk of infection, so care needs to be taken with hygiene and avoiding contaminated water. This can usually be achieved however by picking and choosing dives and wearing adequate protection. Any ear or sinus infection is likely to be exacerbated by immunosuppression so don't force equalising and keep the ear canals dry as far as possible. Interestingly there have been case reports of mild liver dysfunction in normal adult divers, manifest through rises in liver enzymes, typically after repetitive dives. The reasons for this are unclear but we do know that sometimes bubbles can form in the liver blood vessels; and it may be that they form in the substance of the liver too. These enzyme rises tend to resolve spontaneously and there is no evidence of long-term harm to the liver from diving. So, bearing the above caveats in mind, I think you should be able to don a Dominican wetsuit and dive in.

For more Q&As from Dr Oli, check out: www.sportdiver.co.uk/divedoctor.



Sport Diver
MAY ISSUE
ON SALE
Wednesday
6 April

THE RISE OF THE LEMONS

BLUE PLANET AQUARIUM BOLSTERS ITS MAIN EXHIBIT WITH THE ARRIVAL OF TWO NEW LEMON SHARKS

DIVE SITE TOUR RETURNS

FIRST OF SIX GUIDES TO INLAND DIVE SITES IN THE UK, BEGINNING WITH VOBSTER QUAY IN SOMERSET

GRAND TIME IN THE TURKS

GAVIN ANDERSON SOAKS UP THE SUN IN THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS ON A VISIT TO GRAND TURK

SOUTH AFRICA SHARK FEST

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NEW LEASE OF LIFE

The scrapyard beckoned, but the trusty **APEKS MARINE EQUIPMENT** van is now travelling a new road - as the latest attraction in Capernwray

Photographs by MARK EVANS



"GIVE THEM A WEEK THEY WILL REMEMBER FOREVER."



THE BEST FAMILY DIVE VACATIONS, EVER!

Photo courtesy of Brad Holland shot during a Kids Sea Camp week at Manta Bay Resort in Yap

GRAND CAYMAN: June 18 - 25, Divetech and Lighthouse Reef.

"Kids Sea Camp changes lives, one bubble at a time. It sparks relationships with like-minded families, inspiring kids to engage through amazing experiences in and around the sea."

Carolyn Pascal: Former Publisher of Sport Diver & Islands Magazine

ST. LUCIA: July 9-16 & Nov 19-26th, Anse Chastanet & Jade Mountain (July, SOLD OUT)

"I did not think it was possible to have time for romance, time together as a family, and time to pamper myself with spa, yoga, and guilt free diving, until we arrived at Anse Chastanet."

Happy Kids Sea Camp Mom

BONAIRE: June 25 - July 2nd and July 30th - Aug 6th, IDC Buddy Dive Resort.

"Number one in my book for family dive vacations, highly personal,

multi-generational, engages local culture. Each dive program is created with a huge emphasis on safety, and education. Kids Sea Camp provides memorable and intimate experiences for each member of the family."

Rainer Jens: President of The Family Travel Association

YAP: Aug 6-13th, Manta Ray Bay and Yap Divers

"I like the ending ceremony when each family either sings a song or reads a poem they wrote or does a skit about the amazing week we just had. My mom always sings a song."

Zebedee Wakely: Happy Kids Sea Camp Teen

ROATAN: April 23-30th and July 2-9, Mayan Princess and Turquoise Bay & Subway Divers, March 26th - April 2nd

"I love pizza and movie night! I love bonfires and racing hermit crabs on the beach. But most of all, I love

naming every fish I meet!"

Happy Kids Sea Camp Kid

PALAU: Aug 13-20, Sam's Tours and Palau Royal Resort

"When it comes to the search for the world's ultimate family dive vacations, Margo Peyton nailed it when she chose to partner with family owned family run PADI 5 star resorts. I mean, who can meet the needs of traveling families better than a family owned resort, and who knows diving with kids better than Margo?"

Marc Bauman: Director of Marketing and Sales, Sam's Tours

PHILIPPINES: July 29-Aug 13th, Pura Vida and Amun Ini Resorts with Sea Explorers (SOLD OUT for 2016, call for space in 2017)

"The most responsible thing you can do for ocean conservation is to bring your children, grandchildren

and even your godchildren on a KSC dive vacation and share with them the underwater world you love."

Audrey Sarin: Happy Kids Sea Camp Teen

Fiji: July 23-30 and July 30 to Aug 6th, Beqa Lagoon Resort with the first ever Kids Sea Camp Shark School

"Kids Sea Camp is a marriage of land and sea. Margo and I are like a polar bear and a mermaid that created a symbiotic relationship. Margo is of the sea, gently and effortlessly sharing her love for the underwater world. I've blended the two worlds by creating a feeling of community and family bonding through sports like fly fishing, basketball, football and painting."

Tom Peyton: Vice-President of Kids Sea Camp and Family Dive Adventures



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COMING IN 2017: DOMINICA & WAKATOBI



The van is lowered towards the quarry

Wednesday is looking good, said the text from Dean Martin. Was it going to be third time lucky? Due to the appalling weather that assaulted the northwest of the UK in December and January, there had already been two aborted attempts to sink Apeks Marine Equipment's old box van in the depths of Capernwray inland dive site, leading me to have to bump this feature from two consecutive issues, but now it looked like it was finally going to happen...

RAIN, RAIN AND MORE RAIN

Wednesday morning I awoke at 6am to torrential rain and blustery conditions. 'This doesn't look good', I thought, as I started the two-hour drive north up the M6 to Capernwray, but within an hour, the wind had died down, the rain had stopped, the clouds had dispersed and the sun was shining in a vivid blue sky - perfect!

Turning off the motorway and heading through Carnforth, I could see the towering boom arm of the mobile crane reaching into the sky from its base in the Capernwray car park. Operations manager Chris Collingwood was busy supervising attaching the loading straps to the van, which was already festooned with thick rope and eight large plastic barrels, which would provide floatation once it was in the water and being towed to its final resting place.

Team Apeks - Peter Greenwell, Dean Martin and Aaron Bond - rolled up shortly after I arrived on site, and together we all stood and watched as the VW box van rose slowly up high into the sky and was then swung out over the crystal-clear waters of Capernwray.

The Apeks trio kitted up to go into the water with the van, along with chief instructor Guido Quilana, and I boarded the Capers RIB with Chris, who was going to be guiding crane operator James on lowering the cargo via walkie-talkie.

Metre by metre, the box van edged closer and closer to the surface of the quarry, until it started to take on water into the rear cargo area and become back-heavy. Chris slowed the descent to allow water to make its way into the seating area up front through the open windows and the van soon levelled out. So far, so good.



Chris helps rotate the van



Nearly there!



Guido supervises from the water

"Metre by metre, the box van edged closer and closer to the surface of the quarry, until it started to take on water into the rear cargo area and become back-heavy"



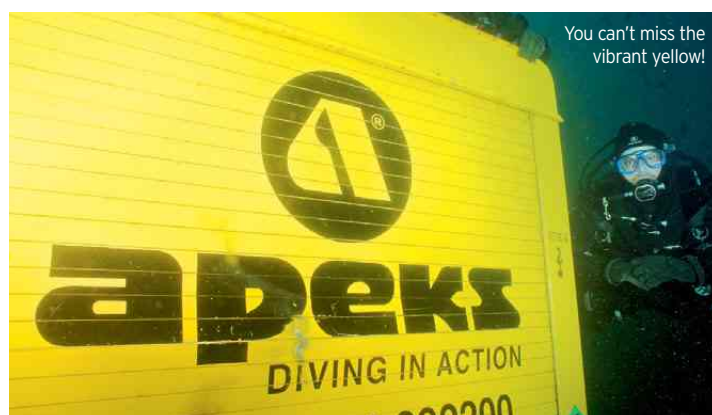
Pete looks in through the driver's side window



Team Apeks with the van

IT WAS ALL GOING SO WELL

Alas, there always has to be a fly in the ointment, and in this case, it was zip-tie failure. The ropes attaching the barrels to the van had loops put into them secured with zip-ties, the idea being that once it was in the right location, they could be cut sequentially by the dive team, slowing dropping the van metre by metre until it touched down on the stony bottom of the quarry. Unfortunately, as the barrels began to take the weight of the van, the zip-ties gave way and the van bottomed out, so Chris had to order the crane driver to lift it out of the water again so that the ropes could be re-fastened with lengths of sturdy nylon cord. Then, to add to our woes, while all this was going on, some of the barrels had rolled on their side and partially filled with water, so the divers then had to go around with a cylinder and blow gun and fill them back up with compressed air. Eventually, it all went to plan, and the van was floating nice and level supported by the eight barrels. Now it was time to tow it to its final resting place.



You can't miss the vibrant yellow!



Pete, Dean and Aaron atop the van



Pete's hastily drawn addition

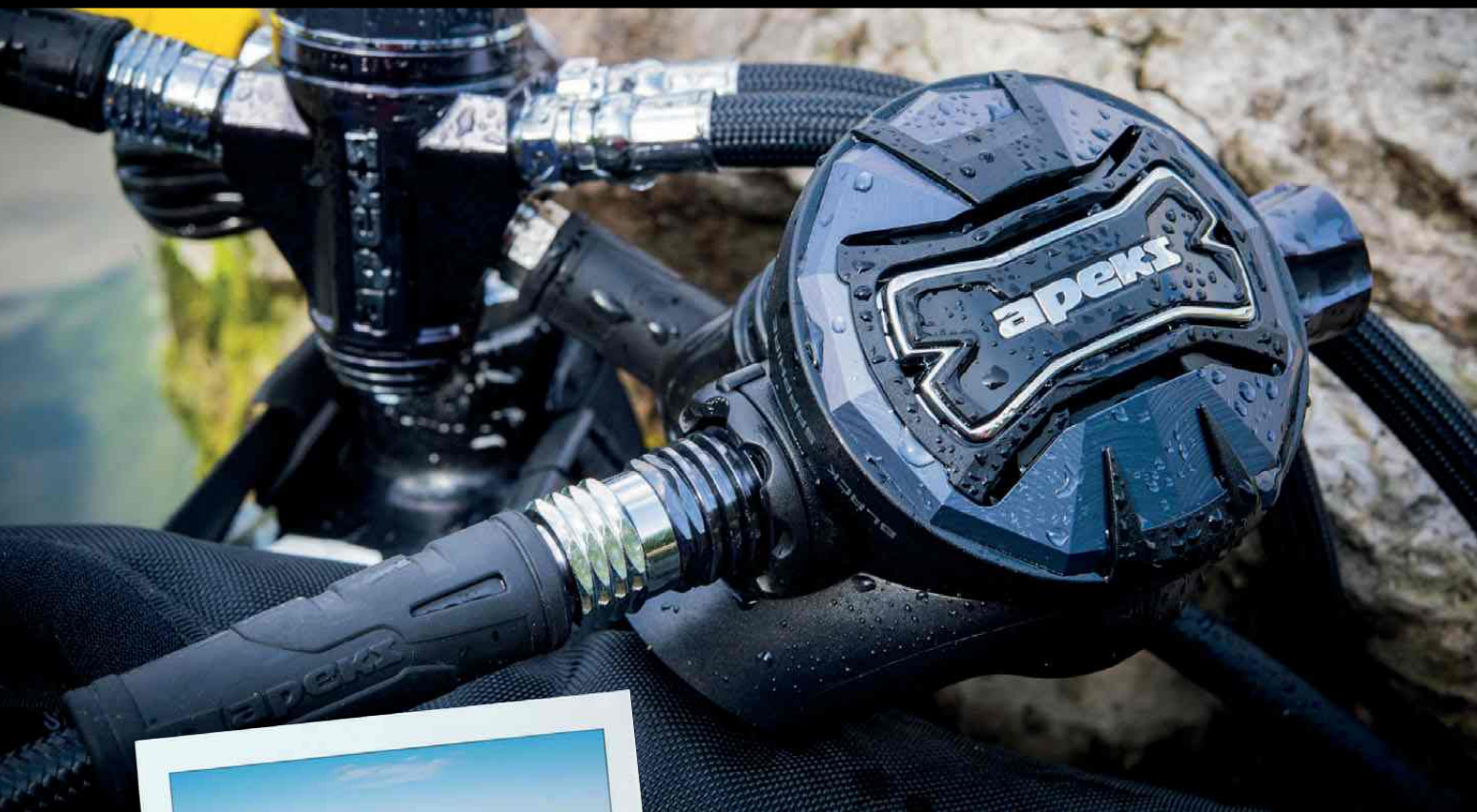


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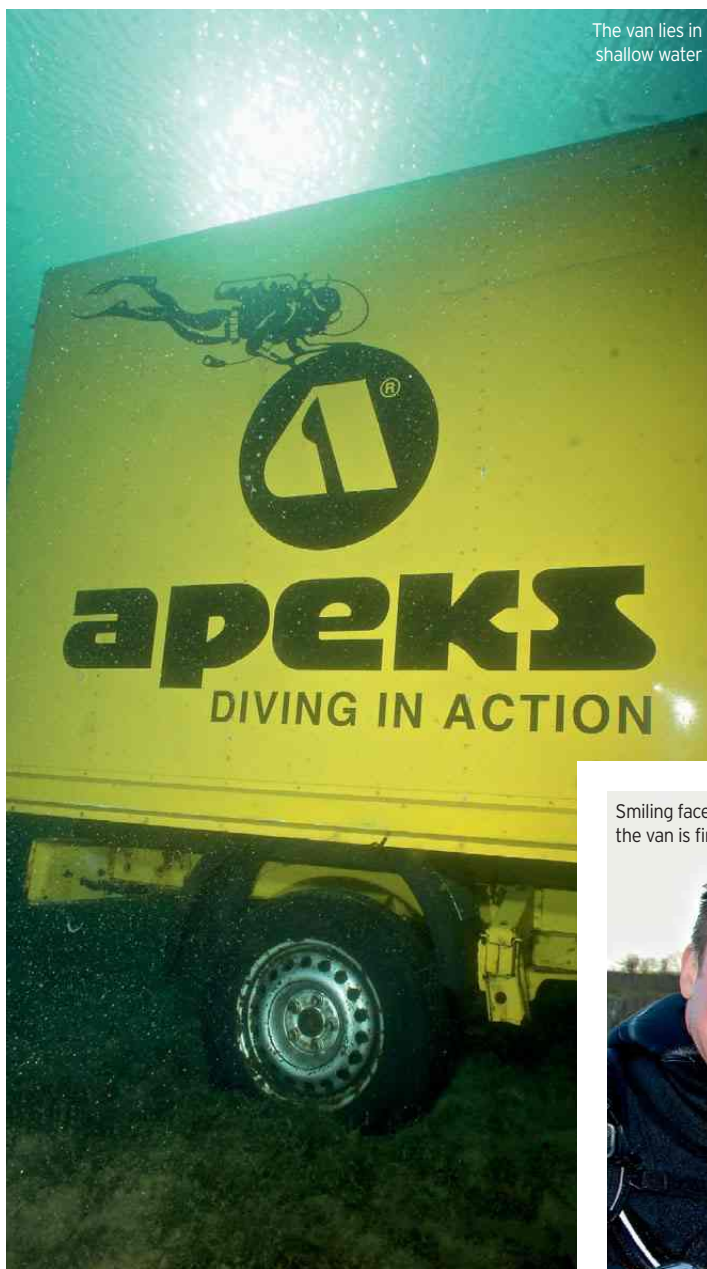


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* Full terms and conditions and how to enter the competition can be found at www.apeksdiving.com.
Closing date for the competition is June 30 2016.



The van lies in shallow water

Potted history

The trusty Apeks Marine Equipment VW box van had racked up over 800,000 miles in its time with the company. Long-time manager Tony Gallagher recalled: "We bought her brand new so many years ago from a local VW dealer, and then had her painted a similar colour to the then-AA vehicles. We had the box made specially for the back to optimise storage space, and had always planned to get a top box put on top of the cabin, which would have made her more aerodynamic, but never seemed to get around to it."

"Having said that, her quirky looks always got her noticed wherever she went, and there was plenty of space inside, as she could transport six people in two rows of seats. She was an all-rounder that served us so well on our many trips over the years - we even had people pitch hammocks in the back to sleep in her overnight!"

When the van had reached the end of life on the road, rather than send it to the scrapyard, Dean Martin came up with the idea of sinking it in the depths of Capernwray as a diver attraction, but dive site operations manager Chris Collingwood was initially against the idea. He said: "The last thing I wanted in there was another vehicle - we've been pulling old cars out of there to get rid of them! However, Dean was persistent, they had it properly cleaned and prepared, and at the end of the day, it is emblazoned with diving logos, so for this, I made an exception to my 'no-car policy'."

www.apeks.co.uk

"This, combined with the 20-metre-plus vis that Capers is currently enjoying, meant that the bright yellow van positively shone in its new home"

THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO!

With Chris holding a rope secured to the front of the van, we slowly reversed the RIB down the right-hand side of the quarry, past the training platforms, past Shergar and Lord Lucan (the giant plastic horses from Blackpool Pleasure Beach) and beyond the motor cruiser Dreamer. The chosen spot was a short distance away from submarine Thunderbird 4, which also sits on the shallow shelf.

Once in location, Guido carefully began slicing the cords one by one, and each depth stage was signalled by an impressive, almost explosive, leap from the barrels. A few minutes passed and then Guido popped up, giving us a big okay signal - the Apeks VW box van was down on the bottom.

The dive team spent the next ten minutes detaching all the ropes and barrels, and we towed these back to the jetty with the RIB. Now it was time to pay a visit to Capernwray's latest diver attraction!

Smiling faces all round now the van is finally in place



ROAD TO NOWHERE

The van will have a buoy to mark its location shortly, but even without one, it is a doddle to find. Just enter the water from the jetty or the slipway on the right-hand side and head along the shelf past the training area. You will pass the training platforms, then the gym equipment - yes, if you are feeling energetic, you can hop on a stationary exercise bike or an ab-cruncher! - between the comedy horses and over the top of Dreamer and then the van will appear out of the blue-green in front of you.

We couldn't have picked a better day for the sinking, being blessed with clear blue skies and plenty of sunshine. This, combined with the 20-metre-plus vis that Capers is currently enjoying, meant that the bright yellow van positively shone in its new home.

The roof on the box section is open, so divers can go inside, and you can have a look inside the cab, though the doors are welded shut, so I reckon the only people venturing in there will be sidemount enthusiasts wanting to demonstrate their ability to get into, and through, tight spaces!

There are plenty of photo-ops with the van, thanks to its vivid colour and shallow location, and see if you can find the personal message from Pete Greenwell, who took a Sharpie to the van before it sank, adding the logo of his favourite football team under his name. ■



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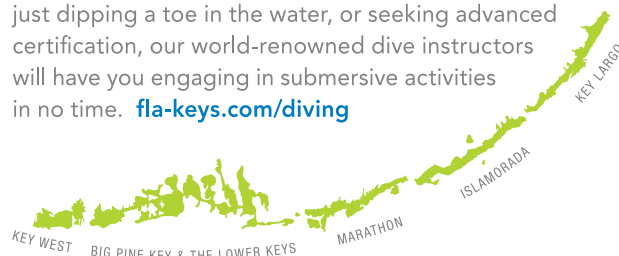
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A Rich experience!



Dear reader, allow me to introduce you all to a remarkable young aquanaut by the name of Arwen Rich - who, at just 13, is not only one of PADI's youngest PADI Master Scuba Divers, but also another welcome reminder that our sport looks to be in safe hands for the future!

Quite aside from her achievements within the PADI certification structure, Arwen has clearly won over her local diving buddies at PADI Five Star IDC centre Divecrew in Crowthorne, Berkshire, as they awarded her their Diver of the Year title for 2015. And I can see why; Arwen has experienced a wider variety of dives than many of us quite a few times her age.

A big fan of diving in Egypt - especially Sharm's well-known Jackfish Alley, even more engaging these days after its enforced 'fallow lie' - Arwen lists such exotica as Kuredu Express in the Maldives among her favourite dives. And in terms of where to dive next, an inspirational piece for her school website records Arwen's wish-list as simply 'anywhere with mantas'!

An early starter, Arwen's diving career began with several PADI SEAL Team dives in an Ascot pool, until old enough to join her diving parents in the ocean. A PADI Open Water referral programme then paved the way, with qualifying dives on holiday providing not just turtles, rays, anemones and sharks, but even a new coral block discovery that her guides named after her!

PADI Advanced Open Water, Night Diver and Nitrox (Enriched Air) Specialities were also completed on the same holiday and, on her return to Blighty, Arwen determined to become as qualified as she could. Along the way, she has cleaned out the Thames in preparation for the Windsor triathlon, carried her Dad on her back during her PADI Rescue Diver programme, and even put her new Emergency First Response skills to good use when a gentleman fainted and hit his head against some railings, so she really has seen quite a bit for one so young!

In keeping with tradition, these last words are Arwen's: "Diving is an amazingly sociable hobby, everyone is incredibly friendly... you get to hear (and tell!) some amazing stories and... experience an incredible variety of plant and animal life, I hope now to go on and increase my skills and knowledge to become a PADI instructor [and] introduce more people to my wonderful hobby."

Amen to that, Arwen!

LEADING THE WAY



More determined souls to report again this month, all of whose outstanding achievements have been brought to our attention recently. Congratulations, then, to the following new PADI Master Scuba Divers:

- **Sebastian Burns, Bilston, West Midlands**
- **Steven Dixon, Douglas, Isle of Man**
- **Harriet Morton, Jesmond, Newcastle**

Congratulations one and all - and, as always, if you (or your buddy) have been missed from this honour roll, please drop me a line to padidiving-society.emea@padi.com so I can provide just and well-deserved recognition in a forthcoming issue of your Sport Diver magazine!

The prestigious Master Scuba Diver certification - the highest non-professional certification awarded by PADI - recognises a diver's mastery of personal diving skills in a minimum of five different Diver Specialty areas, as well as their ability to demonstrate dependable Rescue and Emergency Responder techniques.

If you would like to know more about the PADI Master Scuba Diver programme, contact your local PADI Professional, or write to me here at the Society offices and I will be pleased to provide any information you require on the topic.

The PADI Diving Society has been in existence since 1997, and from humble beginnings has grown substantially, within a few years reaching heady heights of 'world's biggest diving club'. With membership now standing at over 180,000 keen, active divers across the planet, the PADI Diving Society represents a formidable 'tribe'. Now all three sectors of the PADI Diving Society - Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe, Middle East and Africa - have moved from been connected but fractured, uniting under a global banner and becoming one entity, with a unified approach and single magazine title reaching all members, everywhere. www.padi.com/scuba-diving

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Welcome, the AmbassaDivers!

The aim of the PADI AmbassaDiver programme is to acquire a panel of brand ambassadors to strengthen and grow the diver community, attract new audiences to the sports of scuba and freediving, elevate the sport with younger generations, help promote campaigns and drive product launches, penetrate new spheres of influence where diving is not top of mind, and be a sustainable source of continuous and compelling content for consumers.

Some new AmbassaDivers for 2016 have been announced, joining existing AmbassaDiver Charlotte Burns - welcome, Jenny Lord, Indigo Bolandrini and Leo Morales - but if you are interested in putting your name forward for the 2017 AmbassaDiver programme, contact the PADI EMEA office for more information.

As an introduction to the new AmbassaDivers, we asked them a few questions about themselves:

JENNY LORD

Q: What made you want to be a PADI AmbassaDiver?

A: Everyone only gets to experience things for the first time once; the first breaths underwater, the first time seeing a turtle, the first time diving tech. As an AmbassaDiver, I get to re-live these experiences with others time and time again.

Q: When did you start diving, what certifications do you hold, and how many dives have you logged?

A: I did my PADI Open Water Diver course in 2008 with a friend in Salcombe. From there I moved to Dahab, Egypt, and continued my certifications, eventually working my way up to becoming an instructor. I'm now also a technical instructor. I've done around 2,000 dives.

Q: What do you hope to achieve as a PADI AmbassaDiver?

A: When I learnt to dive I had the fortune to learn with and dive with some of the most-enthusiastic PADI instructors. In the same way these people did for me, what I am keen to do now is play that joy forward and pass on the passion I have for diving to a whole new generation of divers.



Leo Morales



Indigo Bolandrini

LEO MORALES

Q: What made you want to be a PADI AmbassaDiver?

A: Motivate all people like me who are cancer survivors or with a physical disability, we have many areas of opportunity to change the paradigm of a person with disabilities as a valuable person who can even set world records and show the only disability is in our mind.

Q: When did you start diving, what certifications do you hold, and how many dives have you logged?

I started to dive after I lost my leg due to cancer in 2008, and I fell in love with diving as an Open Water Diver, Advanced, Rescue, Divemaster and instructor. I have logged more than 3,000 dives.

Q: What do you hope to achieve as a PADI AmbassaDiver?

Scuba diving gave me my life back, in the ocean I found my passion, I'm free and I have no limits there - it is the perfect environment for every person. I want to inspire to everyone to be 'the very best version of ourselves', sometimes life is not perfect, and rather than complain and give up, keep moving forward, and never give up, because we only have one life, and every day is a chance to live plenty, enjoying the ocean, meeting new friends, travelling around the world and



Jenny Lord

taking care of the ocean and its fragile environment. PADI is the perfect way to achieve all this.

INDIGO BOLANDRINI

Q: What made you want to be a PADI AmbassaDiver?

A: From day one being certified as a PADI Junior Open Water Diver I fell in love with the sport. As I progressed on to become a Junior Master Scuba Diver, I knew I wanted to inspire others to do what they love and achieve their goals just as I had done.

Q: When did you start diving, what certifications do you hold, and how many dives have you logged?

A: I started diving just after my 12th birthday in August 2013 in El Gouna, Egypt, with Orca Dive Club. I am a PADI Junior Master Scuba Diver with more than 15 Specialties. To date, I have logged 527 dives.

Q: What do you hope to achieve as a PADI AmbassaDiver?

A: I hope to bring more women and children into the sport of diving, and I hope to also raise awareness of marine conservation. Being a PADI AmbassaDiver is a huge responsibility, but I am confident that I can take on that role even though I may only be 14.

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MY OCEAN NEWS

Domino Albert,
Manager, Project AWARE EMEA

In an effort to make Dive Against Debris™, Project AWARE's flagship citizen-science programme, easier and more accessible to divers of all different locations and nationalities, we've expanded the programme resources to include more than 12 different languages. Divers across the globe can now remove, record and report debris in the language of their choice. Since the programme's launch in 2011, more than 25,000 divers have participated in Dive Against Debris™ reporting over 550,000 pieces of marine debris. With new and updated Dive Against Debris™ translated resources, we're hoping that this programme will empower more divers to take action.

With our underwater skill set, we are uniquely positioned to shine a light on what we see beneath the waves - the negative impacts of underwater debris on ocean ecosystems and wildlife. As the only underwater debris data collection programme of its kind, Dive Against Debris™ both improves the health of ocean ecosystems through localised volunteer efforts and provides valuable information about underwater debris to help inform policy change and support Project AWARE's global Marine Debris Programme. The data collected through your year-round surveys allow us to work with alliance partners at international conferences, ensuring that marine debris remains at the top of the political agenda. By collaborating with governments, NGOs, businesses and individual volunteers across the globe, we're committed to finding long-term, measurable solutions to stop marine debris at its source. Join the fight against marine debris by giving your dives some added purpose - grab your mesh bag, scuba gear and a data card in the language of your choice. Take a giant stride and Dive Against Debris™.

'UNDER THE SEA' BIRTHDAY PARTY SUPPORTS OCEAN PROTECTION

By Alexa Wardle, Project AWARE Community Relations Specialist



The room had been transformed into an undersea fantasy: halls lined in blue and green satin resembled seaweed and salt water while floating balloon fish and jellyfish lanterns bobbed at eye level. The Caribbean Calypso beat Under the Sea pulsed as guests entered the space, welcomed by cascading bubbles and underwater video footage projected in grand scale on the walls. Belgian scuba instructor and ocean advocate **Tori Daenen** was celebrating her 40th birthday in style with 60 of her closest friends and family at her side.

Tori had been infatuated with the underwater world since childhood, growing up watching naturalist television programmes on marine life. She knew she wanted to experience this world for herself, so at age 17 - with her first Saturday job pay check in hand - she cashed in and enrolled in a scuba diving course. With her first breath underwater, she was captivated. Diving gave Tori a greater appreciation of nature and a deeper connection to the ocean. She knew that she wanted to pursue scuba diving and eventually become an instructor in order to share her experience with others.

Shortly after graduating university, an exciting opportunity arose to spend six weeks surveying coral reefs with the marine conservation organisation, Coral Cay Conservation. Without hesitation, Tori hopped on a plane headed to the Philippines. It was during this time that she fully realised the importance of preserving our underwater ecosystems, and she's been advocating for their protection ever since.

As an independent PADI instructor, Tori teaches her students about conserving marine life and the power of individual actions to influence large-scale impact. She focuses on educating her clients on the many challenges the ocean faces, like overfishing and marine debris, and emphasizes the unique ability of the scuba diving community to make a positive difference for the planet.

"As divers, we so enjoy the beauty of the ocean and we want to preserve the natural phenomenon. I think educating people will make a difference," says Tori.

Tori consistently incorporates ocean conservation principles in her daily experience, so naturally, her 40th birthday celebration was no different. With a happy and abundant life already, Tori felt that she didn't need any more 'things'. In lieu of presents, Tori asked her guests to make a donation to Project AWARE's Finathon fundraiser program, and she raised over 800 Euros! Her party offered both a chance to celebrate the marine world that she so loves, and an opportunity to give back to conservation.

Interested in hosting your own fundraiser? Visit: www.projectaware.org/fundraise.

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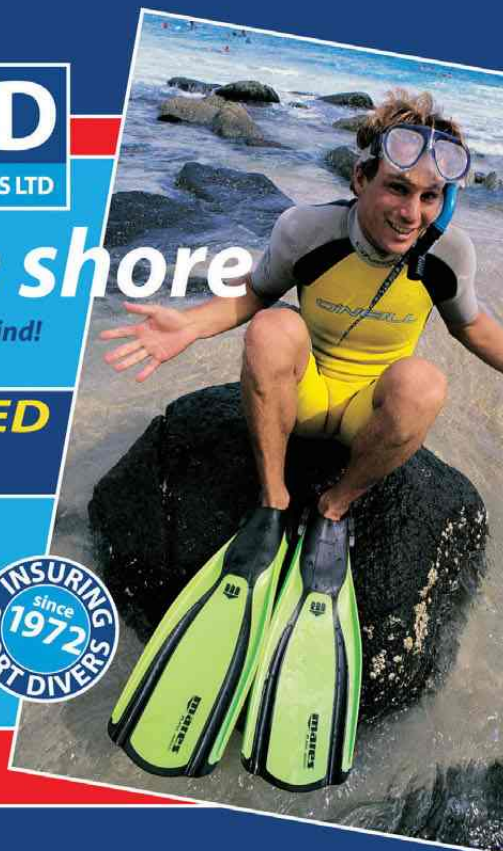
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An underwater photograph of a dugong resting on a sandy seabed with green seagrass. A small yellow and black striped fish is swimming near the dugong's tail. The water is clear and blue.

First find your **DUGONG**

ABU DABBAB in the Red Sea is one of the few places in the world where divers can see the endangered and rare dugong

Photographs by TONY BASKEYFIELD

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Dugong foraging for food



DID YOU KNOW?

Dugongs are thought to have been the inspiration behind ancient mariners' tales of mermaids and they are also closely related to elephants. Dugongs are not to be confused with manatees that live in fresh and brackish water (rivers and estuaries) and have paddle-shaped tails. The colour of a dugong can change as algae grows on the skin. Female dugongs have two feeding teats, one located behind each flipper. Abu Dabbab can be translated as Father's Steppingstones.

Dugongs seem oblivious to divers and snorkellers



My buddy Terry is taking a photograph of a green turtle the size of a dinner table. Instead of joining him, I carry on swimming past, because I've seen something even bigger and more impressive further ahead, munching the sea grass, surrounded by a haze of fine sand and yellow pilot fish. I'm not sure which one I've found - Dennis or Dougal - but 'victory is mine'. So it wasn't too long before my buddy followed me to see a dugong placidly eating breakfast.

Dennis and Dougal are the resident dugongs in Abu Dabbab Bay. It is one of the best sandy beaches in the Marsa Alam region, but is better known to divers as being one of the few places in the world where you just wade in and dive with endangered dugongs and turtles. There's also a small shipwreck and a swim-through canyon with underwater caves there too, though I've never seen them as I was on a dugong mission. The bay is protected from the open sea on its northern and southern flanks by reefs that widen slightly near the eastern mouth. The U-shaped bay is sheltered and its depth descends slowly as you progress further towards the open sea at around 25m.

The night before our first dive I asked our guide what our chances were of seeing a dugong. He said he'd be lucky to see one dugong in 20 dives. There are just seven dugongs that reside along the entire 100km coastline between Marsa Alam and El Quseir.

It was 9am and we were pretty much first in the water. It was a 500-metre swim out along the sandy bottom at Abu Dabbab Bay to the open sea. I could see large marks in the sand, which made my heart race - we're on! I could see their flipper and feeding prints everywhere in the sand, breaking up the natural sand ripples in and among the small patches of seagrass and seaweed. So where were they? We went for a concentrated search for the elusive creatures. After half an hour of criss-crossing and zigzagging we had only seen the odd guitar shark and plenty of green turtles, some of them simply huge.

Water temperatures regularly hit 30 degrees Celsius in the bay, and to top it off we were treated to great visibility - up to 25 metres. It was September and at this time of the year we were able to spend 60-90 minutes underwater on each of our dives as it was so warm. I wore a thin rash vest, photographer's shorts with big pockets and Cressi Gara freediving fins, which were great for the long distance searches.

The search continued. The dappled light danced over the seabed as a cowtail stingray serenely swam by, wings wafting and dragging its distinctive tail as it skimmed the seagrass. The seabed got deeper and the overall colour was much bluer and the water temperature cooled a little. Dugongs avoid the lush grass and concentrate their feeding on areas where the seagrass is sparser. They eat the entire plant including the roots. It wasn't until we were almost out of the bay when I saw it...

Massive green turtles can also be found



"Pilot fish were snapping up small molluscs and crustaceans being flushed out by the feeding dugong, its dolphin-like tail turned upward, paddling gently to keep its head in the sand"

Heading to the surface
for a breath



"There are just seven dugongs that reside along the entire 100km coastline between Marsa Alam and El Quseir"

The crystal-clear water is
perfect for photographers



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Striped pilot fish first caught my eye around a cloud of sand, followed by a bigger object with its flippers and a downturned snout in the seagrass. I could hear the crunching from its molar teeth as it ground up its food. The pilot fish were snapping up small molluscs and crustaceans being flushed out by the feeding dugong, its dolphin-like tail turned upward, paddling gently to keep its head in the sand. As we approached, I could see its nose flaps closed and very small eyes either side of its head. Dugongs have poor vision but acute hearing; it seemed unbothered by our presence. They are shy, and do not approach humans so we did not want to get too close. This dugong was two and a half metres long and probably weighed around 250kg. They live for around 50 years. In extreme cases they can reach 70 years, weigh up to 1,000kg, and grow to four metres. They can swim at 10kmh with a 20kmh burst. Dugongs can hold their breath for up to six minutes, but normally three to four minutes between dives. They

are very placid and spend most of their time grazing - they have to eat a huge amount of seagrass and roots each day to survive. So apart from surfacing every few minutes to breathe, they stay on the bottom feeding.

Dugongs have small hairs all over the body and around the mouth. They are the only strictly herbivorous marine mammal in the world. They can travel up to six miles a day and rarely go deeper than 40m to feed. In the 1980s, it was estimated there could be as many as 4,000 dugongs in the Red Sea. That number is probably now much smaller. They have few natural predators, although sharks are a threat to the young. They are social animals but are usually solitary or found in pairs because the seagrass meadows cannot support large populations.

Two more divers came and joined us, keeping a respectful distance. At one point there were just six of us enjoying the moment, which contrasted with my first-ever sighting of a dugong in 2008, when there were more than 50 snorkellers crowding the poor animal and almost blocking its route to the surface for a breath of air.

Sadly, this beautiful animal is classified as 'vulnerable to extinction' and it is unfortunately on the World Conservation Union Red List of Threatened Species. Pollution may also be reducing numbers too. Its worldwide population is in decline and has already disappeared altogether from the Maldives. The dugong's closest modern relative, the Steller's sea cow, was hunted to extinction in the 18th century. Let's hope the dugong doesn't go the same way.

Even though this is a slow moving animal and pretty easy to track, this was a truly magical moment. I'll remember it forever. ■

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABU DABBAB, EGYPT



HOW TO GET THERE

You can fly into Marsa Alam International Airport, which is close to Port Ghalib, or Hurghada, which then requires a three-hour minibus transfer to get to Marsa Alam and Port Ghalib.

WHEN TO GO

You can dive in Egypt all year round.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

You can obtain a visa on arrival at the airport, usually costing US\$25.

CURRENCY

Egyptian pound (£1 = LE11).

WHERE TO EAT AND MEET

There are various restaurants within the Port Ghalib complex, covering everything from western to local cuisines. There are also several bars for apres-dive drinks on an evening.

VERDICT

Diving with dugongs in Egypt is one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences - a must for your bucket list.

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STAR LETTER

Malta or Red Sea - we have an answer

In response to Julian Denver's letter 'Malta or Red Sea' in the January issue of Sport Diver - I love Malta but I love the Red Sea as well, in particular South Sinai (Sharm el Sheikh). We just returned from a wonderful two-and-a-half month vacation in Sharm that we did as a part of my sabbatical that I am granting myself at the age of 47. We travelled with Egyptian Airlines as we did foresee the complications that you mentioned. The only real complications that I can envision at the moment is that there are currently no direct charter flights. But I am sure this will change soon. However, Egyptian Airlines work well, there is one stop in Cairo and it is affordable. There is a large community of expats in Sharm

and no-one there can really understand the fuss that the media and others are making about the security situation in Egypt. Media sometimes has its own dynamics. On page 16 of the latest issue we read about injured UK service members that are helping 12 Egyptian special needs children. They would not do that if Egypt was not safe. I see no reason why you shouldn't enjoy your winter diving vacations in the warm Red Sea. In case you have any questions, just contact me or anyone in the vast diving community in Egypt.

Christian Hirsch, via email



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Macro magic

The intriguing series by Dr Richard Smith taking readers into the micro world of macro critters has really got me enthused about my diving again. I have been diving since the early 1980s, and after initially been a dedicated wreckie, I turned to photography, but even that was starting to wear a little thin. Now I can't wait to get back in the water with magnifying glass in hand (the old eyes aren't quite as good as they used to be!) and go hunting for all these weird-and-wonderful little beasts. I am hoping to get out to the Red Sea later in the year, and already have a trip to Cyprus booked for the Easter break, but with plenty of UK dives also on the schedule for 2016, I am looking forward to seeing what macro creatures dwell in our own coastal waters.

Frank Simms, via email



Crocs! No way!

It is not that often that I read something which totally throws me through a loop, but Al Hornsby's gripping article about diving with crocodiles in Botswana's Okavango Delta did just that. My wife actually came into the lounge to see what the matter was after I let out an involuntary yelp while reading it!

For some people, sharks or spiders are their deepest, darkest fear, but for me it has always been crocodiles. There is just something so prehistoric, so dragon-like, so utterly ancient about these creatures, I couldn't help but shudder as Al described how they had to enter and exit the water to limit the risk of attack. There is no way in Hades you would get me in the water with crocodiles, but I have to admit, I did enjoy reading about the loonies who did it!

Gavin Emmerson, via email



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CANARIES CALLING

As the UK is buffeted by a succession of storms, **GAVIN ANDERSON** waxes lyrical about the attractions of the Canary Islands as a winter-sun hotspot

Photographs by GAVIN ANDERSON

I've been diving for just short of 30 years now and one place I never grow tired of is the Canary Islands. The weather is great all year round (perfect for a spot of winter sun), you can fly there affordably, choose from a huge variety of value-for-money hotels and apartments and, most importantly, have some great diving. There are caves and shipwrecks, shark and ray encounters, dramatic drop-offs accessible right from the shore, and there is always something to suit all levels of diving experience and ability depending on where you go.

The Canaries are a cluster of volcanic islands, located in the Atlantic Ocean about 100 miles from the coast of Morocco and they cover a length of 550km. Due to a 'hot spot' in the Earth's crust, the islands have been volcanically active for thousands of years. Most of the islands' mass is below sea level, meaning only the very tips of the volcanoes emerge above the water. The most-recent eruption was in 1971 at Teneguía on La Palma. The Canary Islands are part of Spain. There are seven to choose from. The most-touristy, largest and easiest to get to islands are Tenerife, Lanzarote, Grand Canaria, Fuerteventura and La Palma, with the least developed and most-unspoilt El Hierro and La Gomera, which take a bit more time and money to reach.

Each island has something to offer. Tenerife has Mount Teide, the third-highest volcanic structure and most voluminous in the world; Lanzarote the Timanfaya volcano and national park; Grand Canaria the impressive Maspalomas sand dunes; Fuerteventura - loosely translated as 'strong winds' - is a windsurfers paradise; La Palma is home to not one but two volcanoes (the younger, the 1,949m Cumbre Vieja, is the most active in the Canaries); La Gomera has the Garajonay National Park, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986 and one of the best-kept secrets of the islands; and El Hierro, the smallest Canary Island, is packed with natural wonders like rich forests, sea cliffs, lava features and an exuberant coat of vegetation.





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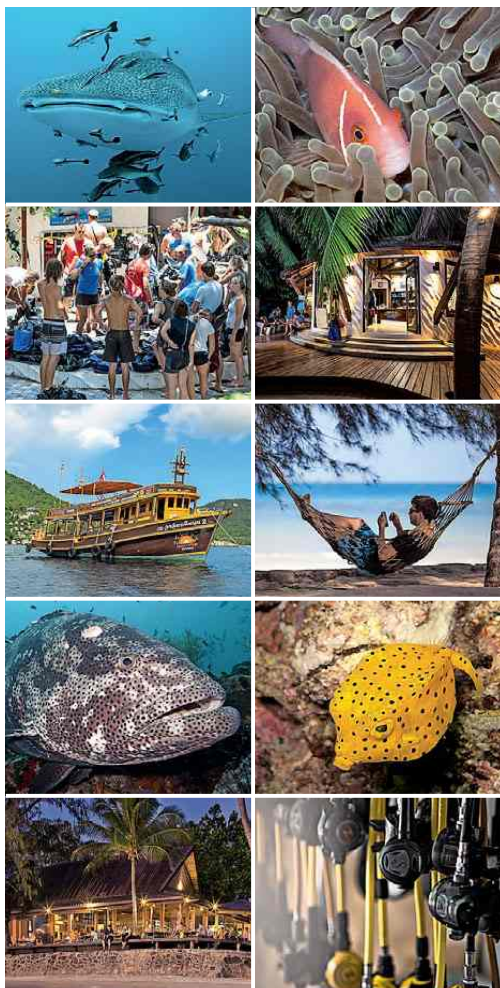
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LANZAROTE

The first Canary Island I ever visited was Lanzarote, and to this day it's one of my favourites. Right off the shore in Puerto Del Carmen there is a whole host of fantastic sites you can dive, most without the need to jump into a boat. Off the beach at Playa Chica - ideally located for Safari Diving Lanzarote Dive Centre, Lanzarote Diving Centre and Manta Diving Lanzarote, where you can get your tanks and weights, or pick up a guide - you can gain access to several wonderful dives.

As soon as you enter the water you're greeted by small wrasse and damselfish, then as you slowly swim over the sand you can start to look for the more-interesting creatures, such as stargazers and weaver fish, angel sharks and rays. Then if you're an experienced diver, you can explore further off the sand over the drop off, which starts as shallow as 15m-20m.

The most-famous dive near here is the Cathedral, where in about 30m-35m you can find black coral that normally grows at much deeper depths. Divers explore a fantastic vast hole in the wall while keeping an eye on the blue for passing tuna, rays and even the odd dolphin!

At the old harbour in Puerto Del Carmen, you can dive on the remains of up to half a dozen wrecks. There are regular boat dives to these wrecks, the deepest of which lies in around 40m, so it's best to give shore diving a miss for these. If you're really an avid wreck diver, you can check out more wrecks over at Punta Tinsona and Barranco de Kikere. Here, where there is a large block of lava forming a black obsidian cliff, jacks, rays, barracuda and angel sharks can all be spotted on or around the wrecks of the purposely sunk wrecks. Yet another wreck can be found not far from Arreciffe Harbour. It's called the Rabat wreck, and at a depth of 36m it's suitable for more-experienced divers.

There are several other dives sites around Lanzarote worth checking out. Over at Mala keep an eye out for some unusual natives at the end of your dive because as well as encountering stunning scenery, grouper and barracuda, you may bump into some naked swimmers as the entry and exit point is shared by naturists!

There is one dive site you don't want to miss on Lanzarote. As this article goes to press, an amazing underwater museum is in the final stages of being completed. The Atlantic Museum will consist of many incredible

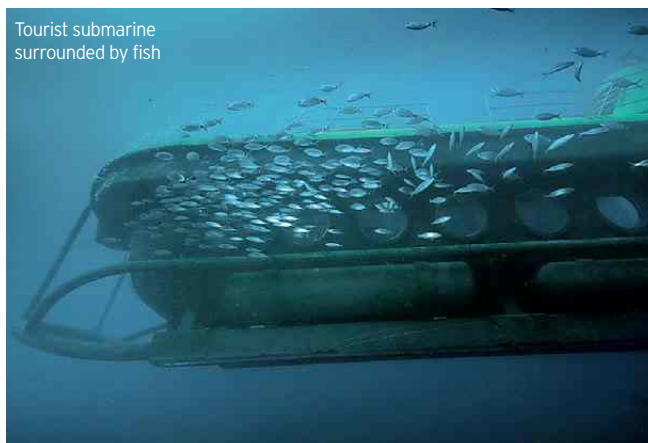
sculptures which are being installed on the seafloor in Colaradas Bay, Playa Blanca, in depths between 12-15m. The museum, the first in Europe of its kind, has been designed by British artist Jason deCaires Taylor, who has constructed similar creations in Cancun, Mexico and Grenada in the West Indies. The creation is sure to be a mega attraction here and the Marina Rubicon Dive Centre is gearing up for lots of extra visiting divers. They can not only take you diving here within just a few minutes of their dive centre, but they are also a one-stop shop for all your technical diving requirements on the island.

TENERIFE

I've dived Tenerife more than any of the other islands. I'm always discovering something new here, there are so many fantastic sites and it's impossible to mention them all, but here are a few of my favourites.

Close to the impressive topside cliffs of Los Gigantes is Atlantis, an underwater version of the Giant's Causeway in Ireland. Fish life might not be so amazing here, but the scenery is simply awesome. Closer still to the cliffs of Los Gigantes is Barranco Seco. Here a rocky reef runs out to sand from 15m-25m. Dive here on a Wednesday or Saturday during one of the twice weekly fish feeds and you will find yourself in the middle of an amazing feed frenzy made up of anything from 20-30 rays, including

Tourist submarine surrounded by fish



Looking towards the southern coastline of Tenerife



Hawksbill turtle



"On the seabed, 40 stone crosses were placed here in 2000 in memory of the 40 Jesuit missionaries who were slaughtered by French pirates in 1570"



Condesito shipwreck on Tenerife

"Here divers can swim with various species of rays, including common stingrays, eagle rays and bull rays attracted by scarps thrown overboard by the fishermen"



Tiger moray



Angel sharks are common in spring

Atlantic, eagle and common stingrays along with grouper and all number of fish, which show up to be hand fed with bits of fish from a bin that is lowered to the site. After a few minutes, the vis can get pretty bad due to all the activity from both divers and wildlife, but you can swim off after the feed to the reef and still watch pair after pair of eagle rays gliding by!

Like Lanzarote, Tenerife has several nice wreck dives. The wreck of the Condesito lies off Los Christianos in 21m. The cargo ship, which was carrying cement, was caught in a storm in 1972 and crashed into the rocks. The wreck lies close to some nice volcanic rock formations to swim around and explore and is home to a good variety of reef fish from parrotfish to trumpetfish. Due to its shallow depth and normally excellent visibility, it's an easy dive suitable to most levels of qualification. Not far away in deeper water lies the fully intact World War Two German minesweeper Meridien. A 30-metre-long sailing ship, used in later life as a dolphin viewing ship from Los Cristianos, it makes a great little dive. In good visibility you can see the whole wreck where she lies on a sandy bottom in 30m.

One of the most-popular dives in Tenerife can be found out of Las Galletas. It's known as the Stingray Bay wreck. Although there is a small wooden wreck at the site, it's not the dive highlight, it's the number of fish, especially dented bream and common stingrays, that can be found here along with, on occasion, some beautiful hawksbill turtles.

GRAN CANARIA

Grand Canaria is perhaps not as popular as Tenerife and Lanzarote for diving, but it offers some great diving and is a good place to learn to dive. I visited as recently as a few months ago and despite unseasonably wild weather, I got some great dives in. I was hugely impressed with the marine life at the El Cabron marine reserve close to Aringa. The bay was teeming with life! I dived here with my stepson on some of his first qualification dives. As well as shoals of bream and jacks, we found several octopus, cuttlefish, hundreds of damselfish, parrotfish, stargazers and a stingray. In a huge cave I photographed beautiful shrimp of various types and a slipper lobster too. To the south of the island lie the Mogan wrecks, two

vessels sunk as artificial reefs, which lie close together in just 20m of water. A very large shoal of roncadors hangs around the most intact of the two wrecks, as does the local tourist submarine. Barracuda, trumpetfish, wrasse, parrotfish and grouper all make their home on the wrecks, along with lots of small wrasse, trumpetfish and the odd small pufferfish.

LA PALMA

La Palma is not as busy as its bigger brothers Lanzarote, Tenerife or Gran Canaria. Los Canjaos, located on the east coast, and Puerto Naos/Tazacorte, located on the west coast, are the main tourist centres and where the dive centre is located too. The steepness of the island is mirrored underwater, with bizarre cliffs, canyons, arches of lava, towers of rocks, sheer walls, caves and many other amazing rock formations.

Just a five minute drive from Los Cancajos is La Bahita, where some of La Palma's amazing underwater scenery offers the perfect backdrop to swim alongside various rays, which might include eagle rays, electric rays, butterfly rays or the common ray. If you're unlucky to miss them, octopus and moray eels are virtually guaranteed. Close by is Maretas, with lovely white sand and some beautiful arches in the shallow part.

The Crosses of Malpique is one of the island's most well-known sites. On the seabed, 40 stone crosses were placed here in 2000 in memory of the 40 Jesuit missionaries who were slaughtered by French pirates in 1570. Deeper down away from the crosses there's an impressive arch at 38m surrounded by fantastic volcanic rock.

In 2001 in the southwest of the island, a marine reserve was created. At Charco Verde, within the reserve, three impressive arches can be found where loads of trumpetfish hang out along with triggerfish, Canarian lobster and shrimp within the rocks and crevices here.

FUERTEVENTURA

Fuerteventura isn't that renowned for its diving but like all the islands has some great underwater scenery and the diving is all very easy. At El Cabesson there's an easy dive on a reef between 9m-15m around a large rocky outcrop where huge schools of

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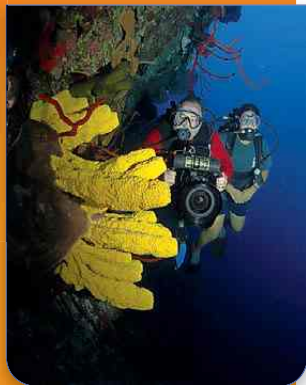
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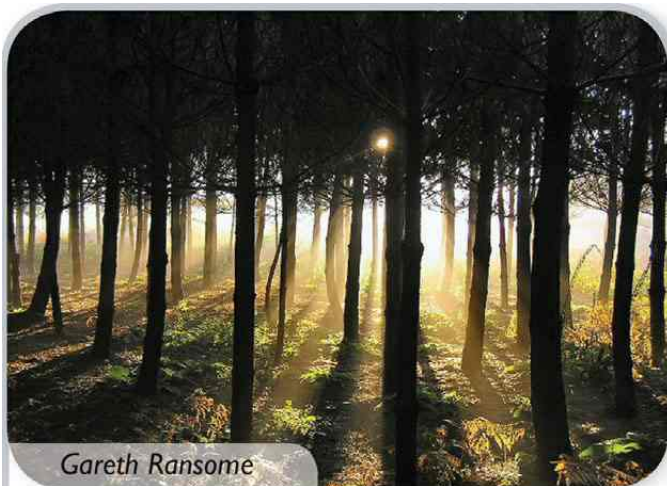
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Canarian lobster on Gran Canaria



Diver swims through a school of Roncadors

damselfish and wrasse can be found alongside grouper and barracuda and, if you're lucky, the odd angel shark! Off the Morro Jable harbour wall, breams and morays, stingrays, and angel sharks can be found on a shallow reef surrounded by sand. A very large number of garden eels can be found at this site.

Veril Chico and Veril Grande are two deeper sites down to 40 m with black morays, dusky grouper, bream, parrotfish and common stingrays can be found as well as barracuda, jacks and, in spring, plenty of angel sharks.

EL HIERRO

The currents that fringe the outer edge of the archipelago bring warmer waters here than to the other islands. Sea temperatures range from 21-24 degrees C all year round. There's greater growth underwater and the variety and abundance of fish is incredible. Couple this with visibility of generally 30m or more, and this is world-class diving. Los Roques de Solmar, where a series of rocky sea stacks and submerged rocks attract everything from hammerheads, turtles, tuna and manta rays, is considered world-class while the El Mar de Las Calmas marine reserve, which is sheltered by dramatic cliffs, offers some brilliant diving. At the southern end of the island is El Bajon, a pinnacle which rises from the depths right to just 9m from the surface. With unpredictable oceanic currents, you're likely to encounter just about anything there from large schools of amberjack, to tuna, bonito, turtles and even mantas. Decompressing on the top of the rock is great, as there are fish everywhere, including parrotfish, trumpetfish, damsels and wrasse. Other dives worth a mention include El Archo, a stunning arch covered in black coral in 40m, Punta Restinga for friendly grouper, and Baja Bocarones for scenery.

LA GOMERA

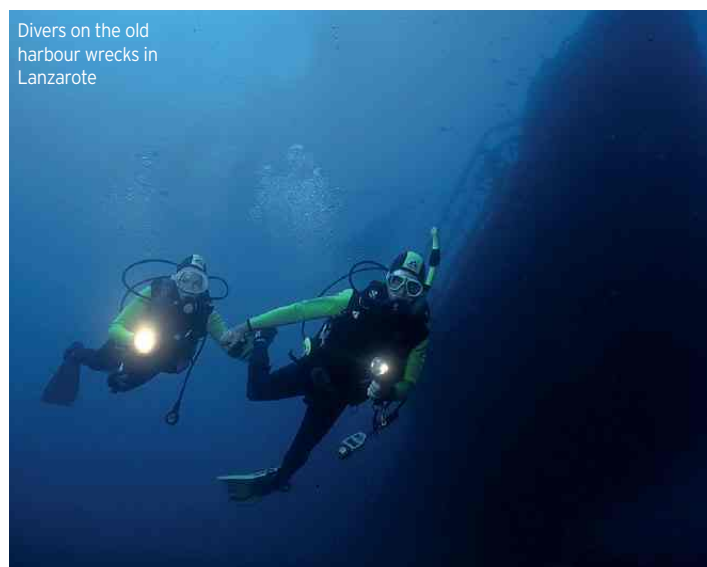
The circular island of La Gomera doesn't have quite the reputation of El Hierro, but still offers some fantastic diving. Punta del Espino is a great site, a mixture of sandy and rocky bottom located just outside the harbour of Playa Santiago. Here divers can swim with various species of rays, including common stingrays, eagle rays and bull rays attracted by scarps thrown overboard by the fishermen. Bastard grunts, bogue and glasseye are also common, as are the odd dusky grouper. Other sites include El

Aguila, where the main feature is a large cave, and a few smaller caves - spotfin burrfish and sleeping rays can be encountered and occasionally shoals of barracuda.

Most of the dive sites can be reached within 10 to 20 minutes by boat from the main dive centres. At Punta Guincho there is a nice arch at 20m and a cave at 12m, and a large rock platform with basalt columns rising from one end. At the Roque Del Herrero, a pinnacle rises from the seabed right to just above the surface. From 14m to 24m, there's a plateau area where schools of bream, jack and barracuda hang out. Lobster, moray eels and octopus can be found at any of the sites, but are especially common here due to there being so many crevices for them to hide in.

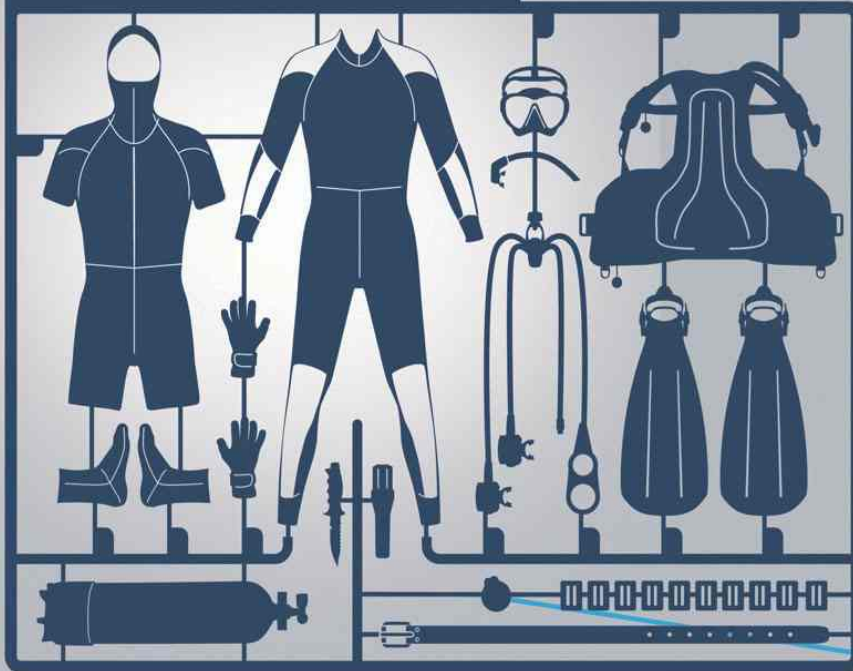
SUMMARY

There is something for everyone on these islands. If you want serious diving, choose El Hierro; for wrecks Tenerife, Lanzarote and Grand Canaria are good. Right now Lanzarote has the bonus of the underwater museum. If you've a family, Tenerife offers loads - the Siam water park is a real hit with the kids and adults alike. The Canaries offer everything - there are botanic gardens, amazing sand dunes, rare biospheres, mind-blowing scenery and volcanoes that are still smoking, secret lagoons, stunning beaches and turquoise waters - and it's all just four hours from the UK. What are you waiting for? Book some winter sun and spring diving now! Oh, just one tip - take a thick wetsuit unless you're going in summer or autumn! ■



Divers on the old harbour wrecks in Lanzarote

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CAPTURING THE CORAL CRISIS

Text by **DANNY COPELAND**



Our oceans are changing. I'm sure this isn't news to anyone reading this column. Fish populations are crashing due to overexploitation, plastic and pollution are suffocating our seas, marine habitats are being destroyed in place of coastal infrastructure. Thankfully a growing number of people are playing their part in addressing these impacts. But what about the other ways we're affecting our oceans? Climate change, rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification. These are some of the biggest issues threatening our seas, yet in my experience people tend to be more nonchalant to these problems compared to the others. Why is that?

Well, I think one explanation lies in the fact that these issues are hard to visualise - they're not as sudden or immediate or obvious compared to a hole in a mangrove forest, or a turtle strangled by a plastic bag. Consequently it's imperative that we find novel and impactful ways of showing people the ways that we're changing our oceans. My latest Scholarship adventure had me joining a team that has set out to do just that. Since 2010, Richard Vevers and his team at The Ocean Agency have been working to find novel ways of communicating important ocean issues to the world. They're probably best known for their Seaview Survey project, where they travelled the world capturing epic 360 degree panoramic underwater photos to bring the underwater realm to a global audience via Google Street View. I'm sure you've seen some of the photos online - they hold the title of the most viewed underwater images ever captured! As part of one of their latest endeavours, Richard has teamed up with environmental film-maker Jeff Orlowski and his crew from Exposure Labs to film and document how coral reefs are changing around the world. Coral reefs are immensely important marine ecosystems. We stand to lose most of our reefs by the end of the century primarily due to rising sea temperatures and ocean acidification. While coral reefs are declining

rapidly by coral standards, by human standards this degradation appears extremely gradual. Unless you frequently dive on the same reef for several years, it's hard to see the small changes going on that accumulate to form significant differences over time. Jeff's film hopes to showcase just how rapidly our reefs are changing in order to wake the world up to the need to urgently protect what reefs we have left.

I was fortunate enough to join Richard, Jeff and the team during the latest phase of their mission up on the Great Barrier Reef. Aside from being the most iconic coral structure on the planet, the team were visiting the GBR for a very specific reason. 2015 saw the birth of the latest El Nino, a climatic phenomenon that usually unfolds every several years. An El Nino event essentially sends the oceans out of whack for a while, and occasionally an El Nino event can be so severe that it causes lasting impacts to marine ecosystems that persist for decades. Coral reefs tend to get slapped pretty hard by an El Nino, and sadly this latest event looks to be a big one. Large areas of coral reef, particularly in the western Pacific are already showing signs of stress and severe bleaching. However the silver lining here is that this unpredictable event offered the team a small window of opportunity to visually document a global coral bleaching event - exactly the sort of dramatic change needed to show the world just how much our reefs need our help. But we needed to get to work BEFORE the reefs began to bleach. Over the three weeks we worked long hours to install half a dozen super-snazzy special cameras that would capture the coral as it stressed, bleached and died. My job was to work as the Dive Co-ordinator and Safety Diver to help the team plan how we were going to get the heavy, delicate cameras rigs onto the sea floor without damaging the kit, the reef, or anyone near it! It was a challenging experience filled with some substantial highs alongside its fair share of crushing lows. The equipment we were using is unique, and nothing like this has ever really been done before. Consequently, even with a great deal of planning a lot of our work was based off of trial and error.

On the other hand, we had many moments of heightened awesomeness. Each and every successful camera install was a major milestone in itself, with subsequent evenings spent briefly celebrating before planning for the next install. Additionally, little bonuses like seeing a dugong, watching a lightning storm while standing in ankle high water lit up with phosphorescent algae, and getting the chance to play and film the underwater action with a £30,000+ camera normally reserved for the likes of BBC cameramen, made the trip extra special. This adventure was an invaluable learning experience, and I'm delighted to have had the opportunity to work on such a unique underwater film project. This is certainly the sort of work I want to continue to be involved in after my Scholarship year comes to a close. In the meantime only time will tell if our hard work pays off, and we capture imagery that will hopefully catalyse a global change of attitude towards our coral reefs. ■

Danny Copeland

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SAILFISH IN THE *Mexican* CARIBBEAN —

DAVID JONES visits the Yucatan Peninsula for the 'Mexican Sardine Run', where sailfish hunt bait balls

Photographs by DAVID JONES

The Sardine Run along the coast of South Africa is one of the most-amazing spectacles of the natural world. Like a marine version of the wildebeest of the Serengeti, shoals of sardines migrate up the coastline attracting predators in extraordinary numbers. A few years ago I was fortunate enough to be able to join a 'sardine run' and it will forever remain in my memory.

What I didn't know, (admittedly after 35 years of diving, I probably should have), was that 'sardine runs' happen around the world and they are often very different.

So when an invitation came through from ProDive Mexico by email to join their sardine run, I instantly assumed they had set up a satellite office in South Africa. "Nothing of the sort," was the reply, "we have one here in Caribbean Mexico... and we have sailfish!"

Of course I knew of sailfish - a bit like marlin but with an amazing and rather bizarre sail on their backs, fastest fish in the world, with a top speed of 68mph. 68mph? That is insane. "And I will get to swim with them?" Well, with a 75% success rate in seeing them, and an invitation for three days of diving, I reckoned my odds were pretty reasonable. "Virgin Atlantic... return seat for one please."

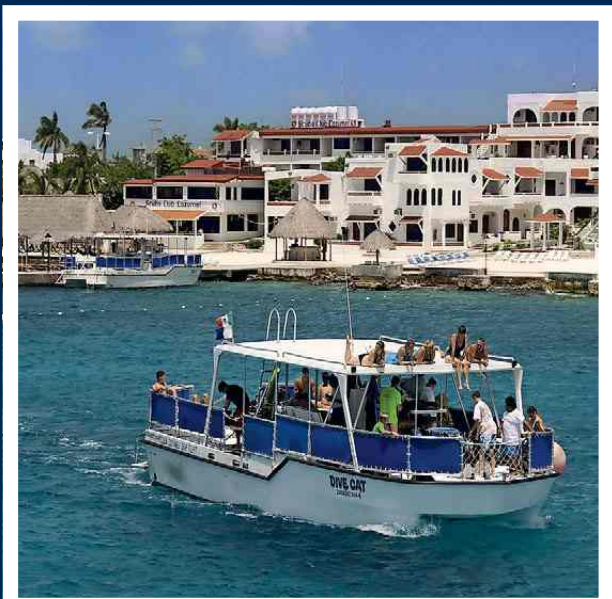
So what was it all about? The South African sardine run is all about ocean currents and water temperature. The sardines spawn in their billions and then, if conditions are right, follow the rich cold waters that move up towards Durban on the east coast. It is a similar story in Caribbean Mexico off the Yucatan Peninsula. The 'sardine' is a similar shoaling fish, but as you would expect a different species. The South African fish is actually the South African pilchard, according to Wikipedia a subspecies of the South American pilchard (*Sardinops sagax*). The Mexican sardines are predominantly the round sardine (*Sardoneilla aurita*) which, confusingly, I also saw referred to as the Spanish sardine during my research. The same species is found in Florida and Brazil and many other areas of the world. Sardines around the world spawn at different times and this usually triggers these mass migration events. Round sardines spawn between September and February in the Gulf of Mexico; the occasional proliferation of manta rays and whalesharks feeding around floating rafts of sargassum in the same area would support that argument.





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SAILFISH TRIPS

Bait balls are often moving very quickly and we drop divers 3-4 at a time ahead of the action, it is tiring and exciting but the adrenaline keeps you going. Small groups mean better vision of the Sailfish and enhanced chances of better images for photographers and videographers and less chaos on the surface.



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Sailfish displaying stunning markings



"The sailfish tactics change from coming in fast from long range at a speed that is almost imperceptible, to one of stealth and swagger"

A sailfish swoops at a dispersed shoal of sardines



Three sailfish round up a small baitball



What we do know is that the sardines follow the cold waters that are pushed down from the Northern Gulf due to winter storms in that region. This cycle of spawning and migration is what attracts brydes whales, sealions, dolphins and gannets in South Africa. In Caribbean Mexico it attracts the sailfish.

The cold currents coming down from the north collide with the warmer Caribbean waters about 20-30 miles off Isla Mujeres, on the north eastern tip of the Yucatan Peninsula and in sight of the popular resort of Cancun. This is where the sardines tend to congregate. It is quite a trek, so if you want to see this spectacle you need to get onto a fast boat and be prepared for a bouncy ride.

The 'official' season for sailfish (making that broad brush assumption that fish use diaries) is from 15 January to 15 March, but as my experience with working with animals and children has proven, you always have to remember they haven't read the script. This year they were seen as early as December. That said, plump for somewhere in the middle and you should be okay.

The sailfish follow the sardine bait balls, identified by the frigate birds that scoop up what they can from the surface, indicating something interesting below the surface. Bait ball 'behaviour' is different to South Africa. Rather than 'super shoals' you tend to get a large number of small to medium sized shoals, so chasing

frigate birds doesn't necessarily lead you to the pot of gold.

During the first day we chased frigate birds - a lot. A sudden disturbance on the surface a few hundred metres away and our eagle-eyed skipper instantly changed course. When we got there it was a whaleshark feeding on the surface. The official whaleshark season is supposedly June to October, but obviously they don't read the script either. Slightly disappointed, we eventually headed home. Halfway there the radio burst excitedly into life in Spanish. One of the other boats had just dropped in on a bait ball with sailfish. Damn. One day down - that had to be my 25% day.

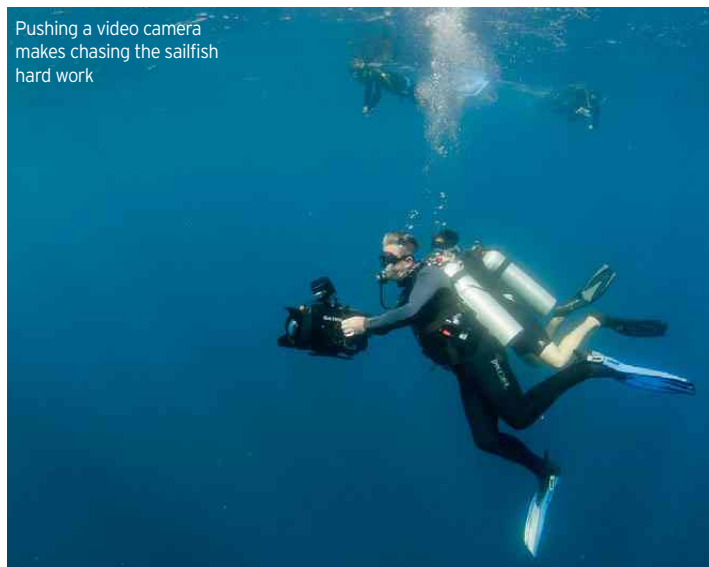
On the second day we were full of anticipation. There were plenty of frigate birds, but on each occasion our guide dropped into the water he came out shaking his head. Atlantic spotted dolphins were there in great numbers and the sardines were swimming fast. The only opportunity was to drop in ahead of the ball and hope they swam past. We had been told that if there were dolphins in the water then the sailfish would be driven away. It was a rumour that was quickly dismissed as we saw fast moving dolphins and sailfish working together to corral the bait ball, reducing it in size at every attack.

By the final day we already had a few pictures in the bag, but it had all been fairly frenetic; fleeting glances, photo opportunities that lasted just a couple of seconds, close, but not close enough. There are complexities to taking photographs of fish swimming at nearly 70mph in rough seas and average visibility, while finning like your life depended on it. The weather was slightly calmer and several 'sport' fishing boats passed us at speed on the way. As we approached the area the action was intense. The fishing boats jostled for position as frigate birds moved from one bait ball to another. Our skipper kept his eye on birds looking for the next bait ball to be pushed up from the depths - the trick was to get onto the ball before the fishing boats... it was like some sort of bizarre sailfish etiquette.

The bait ball behaviour changed during the course of the day. Early in the morning they were often quite large and fast moving. At this stage of the sailfish hunt, you need to be nimble in and out of the boat and be prepared to fin hard. As the day continues and the sardines are unceasingly attacked and consumed, the bait ball slows down. It is almost as if they accept their fate. The sailfish tactics change from coming in fast from long range at a speed that is almost imperceptible, to one of stealth and swagger. They change colour, seemingly at will, producing vivid stripes, cruising around the diminishing sardines as if trying to confuse them. Others raise their sails as they circle the sardines, as if to try and hide their true intentions.



Even snorkellers can get close to the action



Pushing a video camera makes chasing the sailfish hard work



Sailfish raises its fin as it circles its prey



The speed of the sailfish is awesome

“There are complexities to taking photographs of fish swimming at nearly 70mph in rough seas and average visibility, whilst finning like your life depended on it”

Eventually we settled onto a bait ball that was surrounded by around 20-30 sailfish. It was moving, but at a steady pace. The sailfish had clearly been working the ball for some time and they had slowed significantly. The interaction between sailfish in the hunting group was interesting. They would circle the bait ball and then, while the others hung back, one or two would dart in at incredible speed, flick their heads to the side and at that moment you could hear the rasping noise of blade against the side of the sardine. As the bait ball swam on, the injured and helpless victim was an easy meal for the returning attacker. On occasions the sailfish would suddenly disappear for several minutes. Seizing their chance the sardines made a joint decision to plunge down to deeper waters. As they did so you could see sailfish, waiting in the gloom, suddenly rush out and chase them back up to the surface. Then the attack would start all over again.

As the bait ball grew smaller it became desperate and sought shelter from whatever it could, even divers and snorkellers. The whole notion of having a small shoal of sardines sheltering beneath my soft and somewhat vulnerable undercarriage, while hefty pointy things were flying into them at high speed did cause some concern.

Before all the sardines had been entirely consumed we had to reluctantly return home. It had been exhilarating and exhausting but one of those spectacles that every lover of the oceans needs to have on their bucket list. It was one that I felt immensely privileged to witness. The problem with nature is that it doesn't read the script and it is possible that you might not see a sailfish if you do go. With that said, I reckon that odds of 75% are pretty good. And to be honest, the opportunity of being up close and personal with the fastest fish in the world is well worth it. ■

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW MEXICO



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HOW TO GET THERE

Various airlines fly direct into Cancun in Mexico from the UK.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to see sailfish is supposedly between January and March, but they have been seen into December on occasion.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

For UK citizens, a valid passport with six months left to expiry.

CURRENCY

Mexican peso (£1 = MXN27).

WHERE TO EAT AND MEET

There are a wide selection of bars and restaurants in the resort areas of Cancun, so you will never be short of tasty food and delicious cold beers.

VERDICT

Diving with sailfish is a hit-and-miss affair, but if you are lucky enough to get them, then it is one of the world's must-dive experiences.

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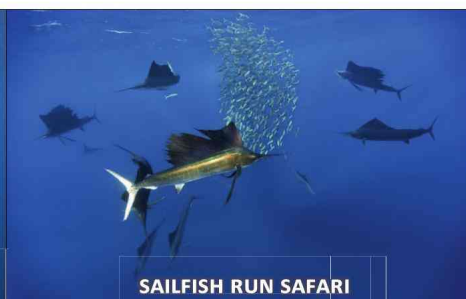
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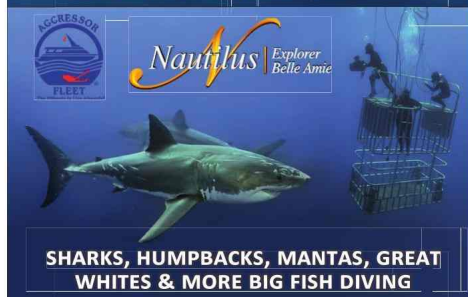
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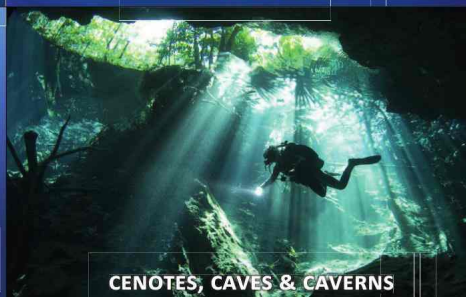
SAILFISH RUN SAFARI



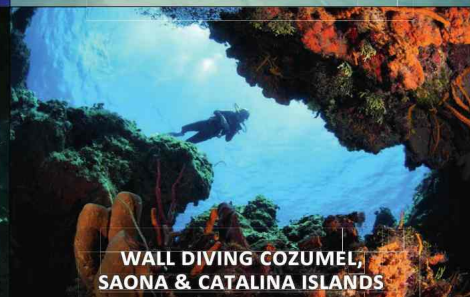
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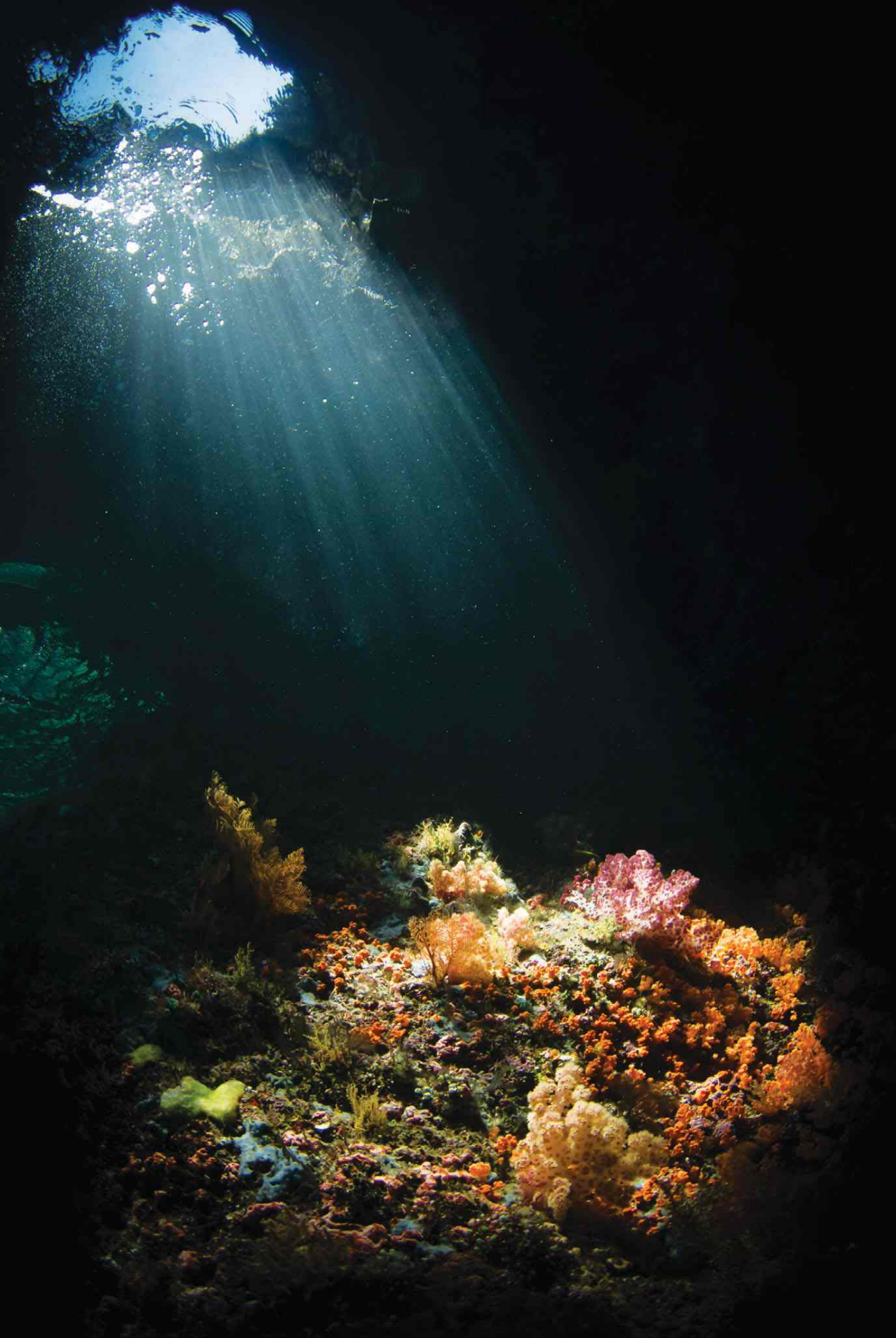
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ABOUT THE LIGHT, PART THREE: UNDERWATER DURING MIDDAY HOURS

Martin continues his focus on using natural light, this time looking at making the most of the midday sun

Photographs by MARTIN EDGE

During the day time, if the sun is behind cloud, the light can look quite flat. Take midday, for instance - while underwater, looking directly upwards towards the surface, you will see a very bright halo. On a cloudy day, it's easy to look into this halo without having to squint the eye. It's a different story if the sun is shining bright in a cloudless sky. Looking up, directly into the sun ball in this way, is something we would never photograph if we were above the water line, however, underwater it can work. Digital sensors have come a long way in the last 15 years and now it's possible to point your camera directly into the sun. It won't work for all cameras but, if your system has the ability to set high shutter speeds in the region of 1/1000th sec and still maintain a flash output, then experiment shooting into the sun by setting your aperture to F8, your shutter to 1/1000th sec and your ISO to 100.

For myself and many others who use an SLR with a cropped sensor (Dx), we need to consider our sunburst attempts. We are limited by a shutter speed of 1/320th sec if we choose to use flash illumination. By all means, try anything and everything but don't be too disappointed if your attempts cannot deal with the intensity of the sun at midday.

In my own work I'm always looking for a surface, which is flat calm and during my Raja Ampat workshop last December, I found an ideal opportunity to experiment and play with the sun's intensity. The image below was not taken in a cave but beneath a shallow 'under-hang' littered with small hard and soft corals. It's important to understand that these amazing shafts of light are not naturally visible to the human eye when in open water. It's the shadows within the 'under-hang', which give the beams their intensity. When I was just below the surface in 1m of water the beams were invisible.



The screen shot of six images gives an idea of the enclosure of the light together with the sunbeams. You can clearly see the under hang in the top middle and bottom left screen shot.

As I descended into the coral cave, the dark walls surrounded and the powerful beams became visible. It was a light show and the light was here to stay. I turned both flashguns to the 'off' position.

I chose a sunbeam, which was wide and at an angle, which accentuated the colours. I looked around for a couple of minutes and settled with the opportunity you see below.

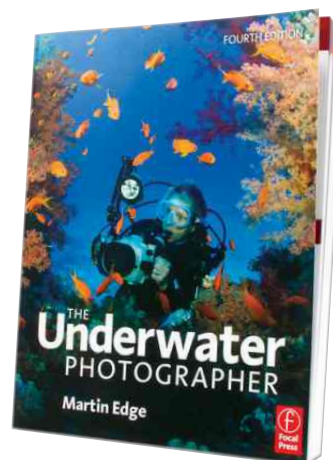
Photographed using a Nikon D7200 SLR in a Nauticam housing. Natural light. Flashguns turned off. F10 at 1/200th sec, ISO 200. ■

NEED GIFT IDEAS?

Martin runs one-day photo tuition courses designed for one, two or three persons. He promises to improve your photo skills by at least five years. Go to www.edgeunderwaterphotography.com for details, or email Martin direct on martin@edgeunderwaterphotography.com

ABOUT MARTIN

Born in Staffordshire, England, Martin grew up without any inclination towards underwater photography. He moved to Dorset in 1977 and learnt to dive in temperate seas off Swanage and Portland, where he developed a yearning to shoot underwater. Frustrated by his lack of knowledge he joined BSoUP - British Society of Underwater Photography - and set out to understand the mind's eye of those whose work he most admired. He eventually became a gifted teacher and over the last 30 years has taught and mentored many hundreds of UW photographers, including the finest in the UK today.



SIGNED BY THE AUTHOR!

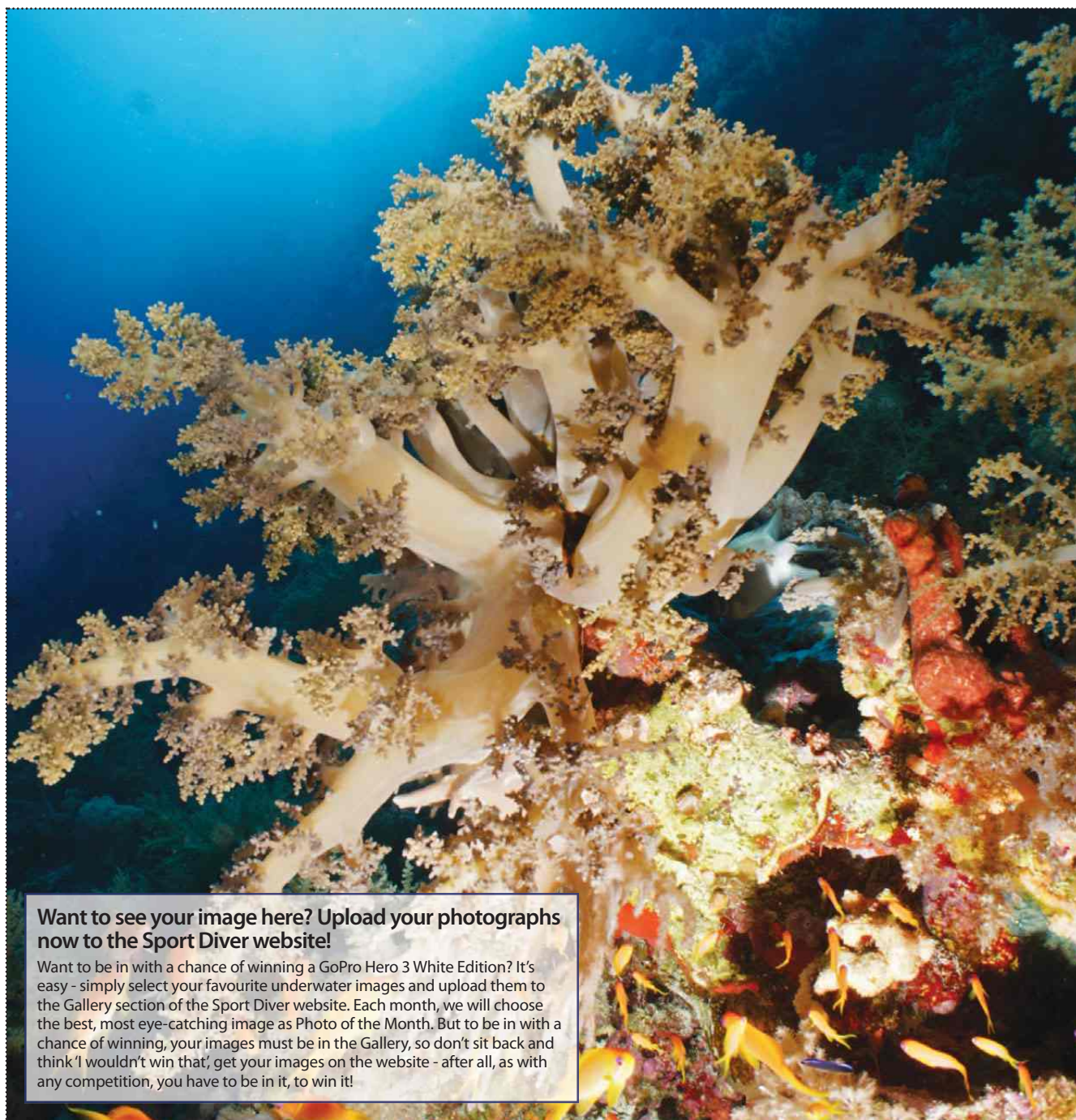
The 4th edition of Martin's book, 'The Underwater Photographer', is widely considered the best-selling book on underwater photography worldwide. For a signed copy, phone 01202 887611 or email:

martin@edgeunderwaterphotography.com

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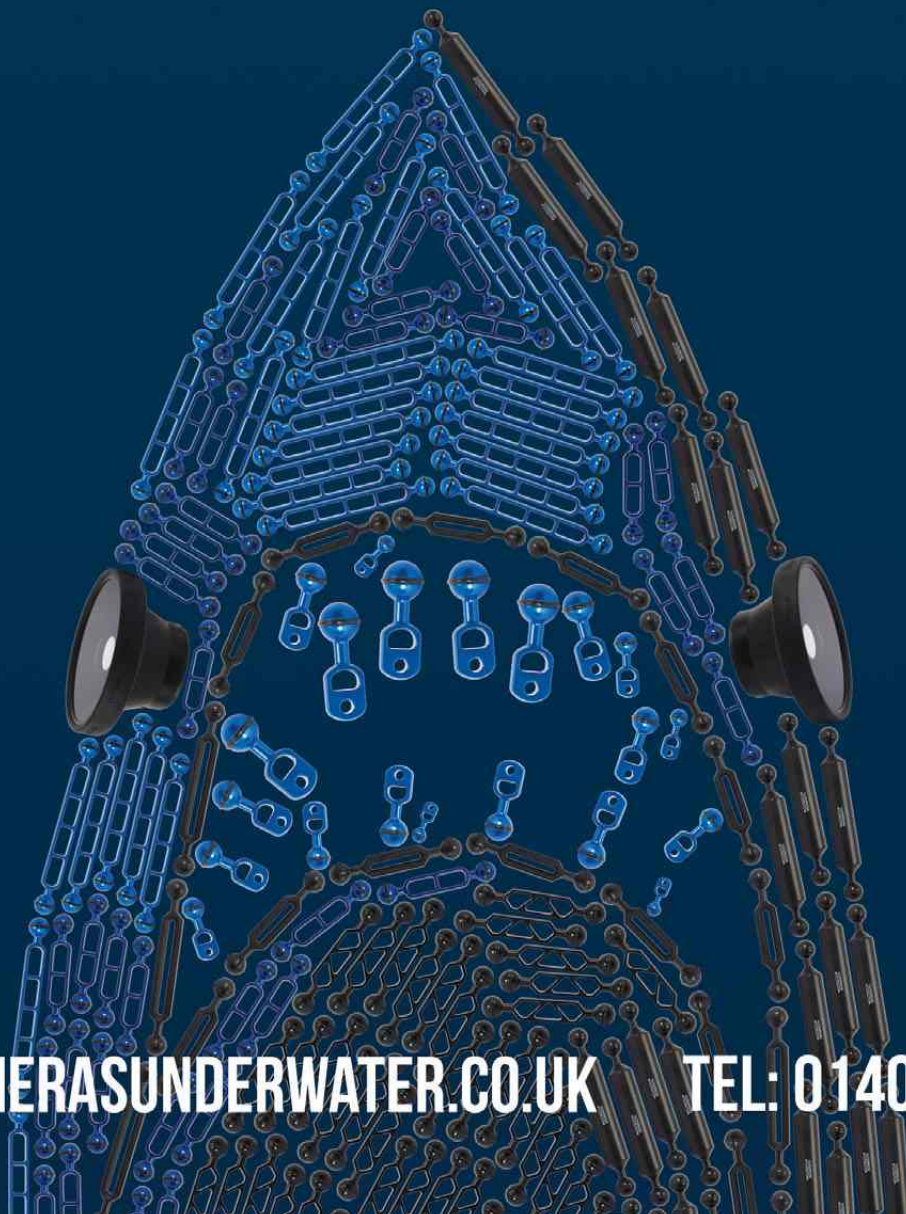
Want to be in with a chance of winning a GoPro Hero 3 White Edition? It's easy - simply select your favourite underwater images and upload them to the Gallery section of the Sport Diver website. Each month, we will choose the best, most eye-catching image as Photo of the Month. But to be in with a chance of winning, your images must be in the Gallery, so don't sit back and think 'I wouldn't win that', get your images on the website - after all, as with any competition, you have to be in it, to win it!

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Scorpionfish on
the Um El Faroud



Encrusting growth
on the Maori



SHORT-HAUL Sunshine

The endless rain and grey skies getting you down? Can't wait for the UK season to kick off? Why not cheer yourself up with some winter sun on a long-weekend in Malta?

Photographs by MARK EVANS

I don't know about you, but peering out of the office window and seeing dull grey skies and endless drizzle (or torrential downpours!) - not to mention being blasted by icy winds every time you open the door - tends to get me feeling a little down in the dumps. Roll on the summer - sunshine, blue skies, warmer temperatures and the great British diving season!

However, deep down, we all know that we can't rely on good old Blighty to deliver right on schedule, so to give you that boost of Vitamin D and put a smile on your face, why not contemplate hopping on a plane for a long weekend where decent topside and diving conditions are more or less guaranteed?

The island archipelago of Malta, Gozo and tiny Comino sits in the middle of the Mediterranean, less than a three-hour flight from the UK and blessed with mild temperatures even in the depths of our winter. They even drive on the left, so Brits feel right at home!

It had been a couple of years since our last Sport Diver team trip to the islands, so at the end of 2015, myself and Deputy Editor Will Harrison, ad manager Ross Arnold, sales exec Sam Wren, Sport Diver contributor Jason Brown and PADI EMEA's Simon Chance flew out for a few days of diving. We had a plan to divide and conquer - Jason would be hitting some of Malta's deeper wrecks, Will would be completing his PADI Rebreather Diver course (see the December 2015 issue for his report on his first foray into eSCR territory), Sam would be notching up his PADI Advanced Open Water Diver cert, leaving Simon, Ross and I to relax and just go diving!

We flew into Malta on the Thursday, arriving early evening, which meant we could all get three full days of diving in and then fly home on the Monday night. On the Friday morning we were up and on the ferry at stupid o'clock to dive in Gozo, but that adventure will be recounted in a future issue. Right here and now I am concentrating on our travels over the weekend, when we joined two different dive centres to explore Malta's underwater delights.

Remember I said that decent topside and diving conditions were more or less guaranteed? Well, someone in our group must have done something to offend the weather gods, as come the Saturday morning, it was blowing an absolute hoolie. The sun was shining and it was nice and warm as we were picked up by a smiling Julian Doyle, from Dive Shack, but from the look on his face we could tell it wasn't good news when it came to diving. Trust us to land on one of the odd weekends when the Maltese conditions took a rare turn for the worse.

The Dive Shack team wanted to get us over to their new satellite operation on Comino, which nestles between Malta and Gozo, but alas, this was not to be. Instead, experienced instructor Julian had to thumb through his mental logbook of Malta dive sites to work out what was going to be feasible in these conditions. And this is the beauty of Malta - the island is so compact, whatever the weather is doing, you can find somewhere to go diving, even when it is as lousy as what we were currently experiencing.

"The island archipelago of Malta, Gozo and tiny Comino sits in the middle of the Mediterranean, less than a three-hour flight from the UK and blessed with mild temperatures even in the depths of our winter"

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"Topside it was still endless blue skies and glorious sunshine, and we were basking in high temperatures in shorts and T-shirts - a far cry from those we left at home"



Simon looking at a winch on the Maori



Ross peering inside the Maori superstructure



Memorial plaque on the Um El Faroud

Dive Shack Scuba School

PADI five-star IDC centre Dive Shack is based centrally in Sliema, close to Valetta, on the Qui-Si-Sana seafront, and also has a satellite centre on Comino. PADI Course Director Rita Vella and her team can offer courses ranging from Discover Scuba right up to PADI Pro level and even PADI Tech certifications, and have a range of dive packages, including a three-island special. They have a broad selection of rental equipment if you don't want to haul all your own gear, and they offer a pick-up service from any hotel on Malta.

www.divemalta.com

However, during the process, the vessel broke in two - the bow section (which we would be exploring) sank to the seabed, while the rest of the ship was dumped into deeper water offshore.

The remains of the HMS Maori are broken up, with a portion of the bridge section still intact. Limited penetration is possible - it is more of a giant swim-through - but beware kicking up the silty bottom. As well as recognisable sections of ship, such as bollards, winches, etc, the whole ship is alive with marine life, including various reef fish shoals, octopus, scorpionfish, nudibranchs, fireworms and even seahorses, if you are sharp-eyed.

The diving day completed, we bid farewell to Julian and after filling our bellies with a few well-deserved Cisk beers and some tasty burgers, we crashed for the night, keeping everything crossed that the conditions would improve overnight.

We awoke to trees still billowing in the strong wind - it seemed our pleas to the weather gods had gone unheard. Still, we felt certain that our dive centre for the day - Seashell Dive Centre - would come up with something to keep us occupied, and they certainly did, sending us and a group of their other divers to the southwest of the island and the final resting place of the Um El Faroud.

This 110-metre tanker became Malta's largest artificial reef when it was sunk in 35m in September 1998. Over the years, the Faroud has taken on the appearance of a 'proper wreck', especially after the vessel broke in two during winter storms. Its huge holds can be explored,

For our first site of the day, he actually managed to come up with a dive site I had never visited, even with many Malta assignments under my belt - the SS Margit.

Unfortunately, as the Dive Shack pick-up rounded the corner to the parking area, it appeared that every other dive centre on the island had had the same idea! There were trucks, mini-buses and pick-ups as far as the eye could see, surrounded by hives of activity as divers bustled around preparing their kit. Thankfully, it seemed that many had already been in the water, and others were faffing about getting ready, so we kitted up in record time and headed in.

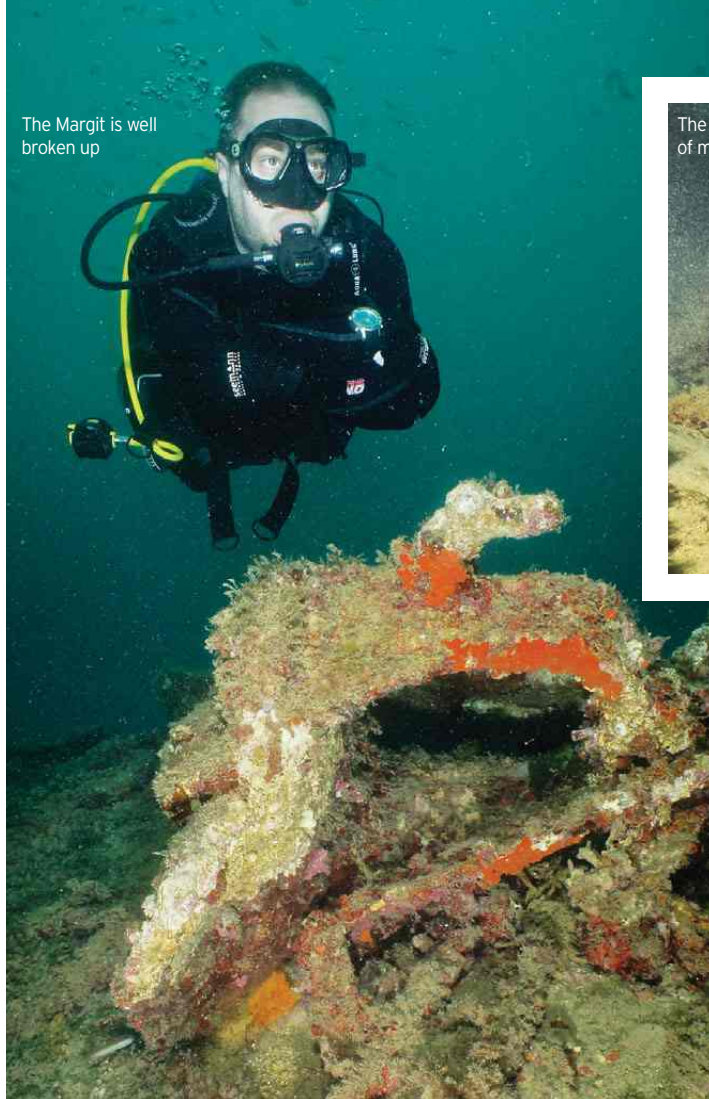
Julian had warned us that the vis would be less than perfect - the bottom of the harbour is a fine silt, which makes it murky at the best of times, but after hordes of divers had ploughed through it on their way to and from the wreck, at times it felt more like a grey soup! We stuck close together and followed Julian, who unerringly led us directly onto the broken-up remnants of the 105-metre Margit.

While it is in pieces, there are several sections that are easily identifiable, none more so than the enormous pistons from the engine. Even in the dire vis, these were impressive, and I would love to visit the wreck on a diver-free day and see it in all its glory. I reckon if you hit this shipwreck on a good-vis day, it would be a belter.

So, the vis wasn't great, but heh, it was still an interesting dive, and another one for me to add to my Malta logbook. De-kitted and dried off, we munched on a local pastizzi - Julian is 'the man' when it comes to locating the best pastizzi on Malta, by the way - as we discussed our next dive site. Julian decided Valetta Harbour was still our best bet given the conditions, and so we opted for the HMS Maori, a Tribal-class destroyer now lying in 16m a short distance from the shore.

The Maori was sunk on 12 February 1942 after being hit by an enemy bomb, but in 1945, the decision was made to raise and scuttle it as it was blocking a major shipping route.

The Margit is well broken up



The Maori has plenty of machinery to see



Seashell Dive Centre

Seashell Dive Centre celebrated 10 years in business in 2015, and is located in Mellieha Bay in the northeast of the island. Hubert Borg and his team can offer PADI courses from beginner up to Divemaster, as well as a selection of diving packages, including a wreck special, and one that takes in all three islands and includes hotel accommodation. They also have a wide selection of rental equipment available.

www.seashelldivingmalta.com

Massive anchor chain on the Margit



but the rear superstructure and the impressive rudder and propeller are the main points to visit.

As the weather was proving to be the limiting factor on available dive sites, we decided to do two dives on the Faroud. It is such a large vessel that you can easily spend several dives on it and not see all it has to offer, but the stern section is the most interesting and so we decided to concentrate on that.

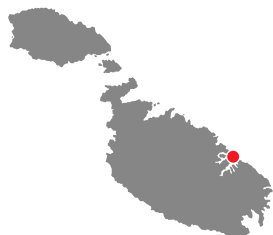
On our second dive, as we returned from the wreck, we actually managed to overshoot the entrance to the channel where the entry/exit ladders are. As we retraced our steps along the wall once we'd realised our error, I was pleasantly surprised to see it comprised numerous crevices and overhangs, all covered in colourful encrusting sponges and algal growth. It proved to be a very scenic end to the dive, and on a future visit I'd like to explore further along this rocky wall, which was reminiscent of the topography found off Gozo.

Conclusion

So the weather gods decided to put a bit of a dampener on our long weekend

by severely limiting our available dive sites, but when one of those sites was arguably the best recreational-depth wreck on the island - the Faroud - there wasn't that much to complain about. Topside it was still endless blue skies and glorious sunshine, and we were basking in high temperatures in shorts and T-shirts - a far cry from those we left at home. One thing that our weekend did prove was that if you did happen to land on one of the rare less-than-perfect weather periods in Malta, you can still get some top-quality diving in - and come back with a bit of a tan to annoy all your friends stuck in the UK! ■

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW MALTA



FreeVectorMaps.com

HOW TO GET THERE

There are various airlines which fly to Malta from the UK, from several regional airports.

WHEN TO GO

You can dive in Malta and Gozo all year round, but the warmest temperatures are in the summer. A thick wetsuit, semi-dry or even drysuit is ideal in the winter months.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

A valid passport with six months left to expiry.

CURRENCY

Euro (£1 = Euro 1.29).

WHERE TO EAT AND MEET

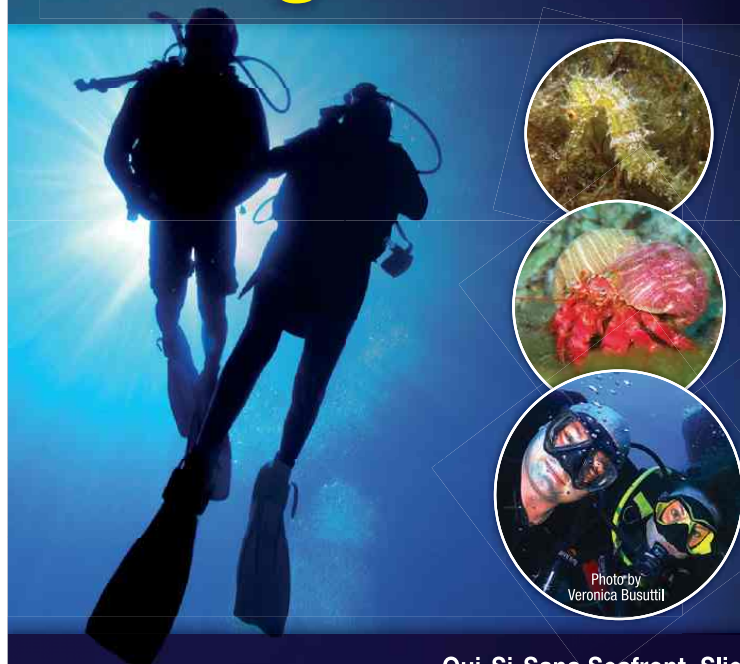
Whichever resort area you are based in, there are plenty of options when it comes to dining out or having an after-dive beverage.

VERDICT

Malta and Gozo are quick and easy to get to, and offer the perfect long-weekend tonic to the wet and windy weather of this UK winter.

Diving in Malta

Our PADI 5-Star Instructor Development Centres are in Sliema (Malta) and on the island of Comino.



Photoby
Veronica Busuttill

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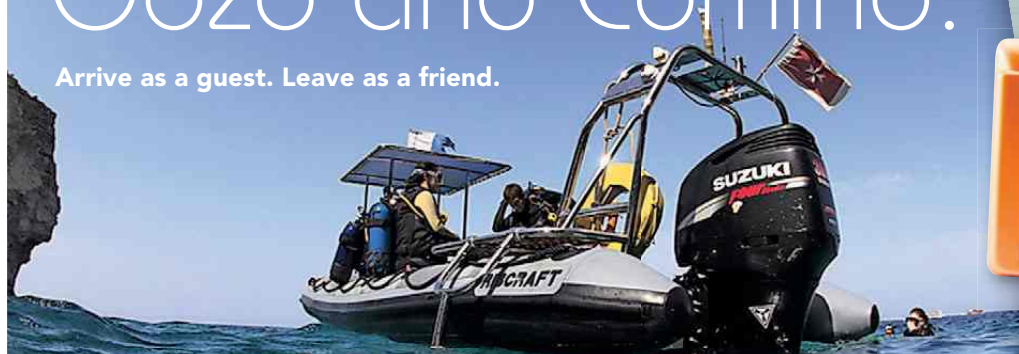


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SCUBALAB WHAT'S NEW

EEZYCUT TRILOBITE | £24.95 (€32.17)



Every diver needs a cutting tool with them on every dive, in case they get snagged on monofilament line, finds something tangled up that needs freeing, or just for those times when you are kitting up and something requires trimming.

Gone are the days when divers felt the need to carry a knife the size of Excalibur, and there are a multitude of small BCD knives currently available, but the patented Eezycut Trilobite is a compact cutting tool that is easy to use, even wearing thick gloves, will slice through virtually any rope in a split-second, and best of all, it is extremely safe and almost impossible to cut yourself with by accident.

It comes with a range of sheaths (wrist, shoulder and harness mounts), and in a wide selection of colours, including high-vis and fluorescent.

www.blueorb.co.uk

SEAC SUB PRIVILEGE XT | 5mm £155 (€199.85); 7mm £190 (€244.98)



The classic two-piece Privilege suit is renewed, refining the characteristics of this product, which is versatile and suited for all. The outer lining is Nylon XT Extend with the addition, for the 7mm version, of Superelastic Techspan inserts on chest and hood, and the inner lining is Dry Fibre. The suits have Aquastop wrists and ankles in Smooth Skin, with Powertex knee reinforcements; and the front zipper (with side closure on the face) is in new position.

Available in 7mm and 5mm for men, and 5mm for women.

www.seacsub.com

FOURTH ELEMENT ARCTIC HAT | £44.95 (€57.96)

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SCUBAPRO HYDROS PRO | £509 (€656.28)



In another industry first, Scubapro has broken through long-standing barriers in BCD design and manufacturing with an innovative process for building BCD harnesses. The Hydros Pro is an incredible feat of engineering, offering unprecedented convenience, on-the-go configuration, specialised fit and more.

No water absorption means neutral buoyancy, and a lightweight BCD that is dry when it comes out of the water. Hydros Pro also stands up to UV, chemicals and abrasion.

With a quick switch of clips, Hydros Pro transforms from a basic harness travel BCD to a jacket with fully integrated weight pockets.

Pack your entire kit into the small backpack (included), or 25L Dry Bag, and get going. Easily add, remove or replace weight systems, straps, pouches and more, even in the field. The modular design is proven to extend BCD lifespan due to simplified repairs.

You can accessorise the Hydros Pro with a wide range of mountable accessories and kits. No pockets necessary.

There is also a ladies version, with a smaller air bladder, shorter inflator hose, and curved shoulder straps that fit perfectly.

Colour kits are available for all versions to match Seawing Nova fins.

www.scubapro.co.uk

SOPRAS SUB MONOFIN | £80 (€103.15)



Small monofin, ideal for freedivers wanting to get in some pool training. Available in four sizes - S, M, L, XL

www.soprassub.com

SEAC SUB X-FRAME | £33 (€42.55)



The X-Frame is a stylish single-lens mask with robust clips and a low profile, meaning it offers good all-round vision and is easy to clear. It is available in white and black.

www.seacsub.com

FOURTH ELEMENT NECK SNUG | £16.95 (€21.85)

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SCUBALAB GEAR GUIDE

Each month, the Sport Diver test team assembles to rate and review a selection of diving equipment from a range of manufacturers. This issue:

Regulators priced under £250

REGULATORS. The most-important thing in the diver's arsenal of equipment. And there are a vast array on the market, ranging from under £200 to nearing a grand, so we have split them into three price brackets - under £275, £275-£400, and over £400. This issue we will be looking at the budget end of the scale. We test the regulators in Vivian Quarry in the heart of Snowdonia in January for the annual review, firmly in the belief that if they can put up with our robust approach to reviewing in these extreme diving conditions, then they will be more-than-fine come the British diving season when water temps will be significantly higher than low single figures. We do everything you shouldn't do when cold-water diving - purge and rapidly breathe them topside prior to diving, then repeat these exercises underwater as well as looking at the comfort of the mouthpiece, ease of use of the purge and any other controls, and the efficiency of the exhaust.

THE TEST TEAM



MARK EVANS

- Sport Diver editor
- PADI Divemaster
- 30 years of diving experience



MATT MARTIN

- Dive officer, Blue Planet Aquarium
- PADI OWSI
- 10 years of diving experience



WILL HARRISON

- Sport Diver deputy editor
- PADI TEC 50
- 6 years of diving experience



BARRY HENDERSON

- Rope access specialist
- NAUI OW Diver
- 5 years of diving experience

Masks on test

MODELS

- Apeks ATX40/DS4
- Aqualung Core Supreme
- Oceanic Alpha 9 Slate/CDX5
- Scubapro C350/MK11
- Seac Sub MX100

DATE TESTED 19/1/16

WATER TEMPERATURE
6-7 degrees C

Test dives conducted at Vivian Diving Centre, Llanberis, North Wales
www.viviandivecentre.co.uk

"Regulators are the most-important thing in the diver's arsenal"



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BEFORE YOU HIT THE WATER: Give it a once-over - inspect the second stage for a tight casing cover and exhaust tee, and make sure the mouthpiece is secured with a clamp or zip-tie. Connect it to your cylinder, turn on the gas and then check everything works as it should, i.e. purge button, user controls, etc.



APEKS ATX40/DS4 | £216 (€279)



PRODUCT OVERVIEW

Apeks has been a firm favourite for British divers for many years, and the trusty ATX40 has been the Blackburn-based company's entry-level regulator for several years. Its looks might be more utilitarian than aesthetically pleasing, but it has everything a UK diver could want - environmentally sealed first-stage, large purge button, venturi lever, four low-pressure ports, and one high-pressure port.

TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The Test Team universally acclaimed the breathe of the ATX40, with Mark singling out the Apeks reg for its 'excellent smooth, dry breathe in all positions'. Matt stated that 'Apeks are the industry standard, and the ATX40 certainly makes a bargain-basement entry into the



tried-and-tested brand'. The dated looks of the second stage in particular came in for some criticism, but none questioned the great value for money. The ATX40 also garnered praise for its comfortable Comfo-Bite mouthpiece and efficient exhaust valve.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★



WE LIKE

Build quality, performance, price, comfort



WE DON'T LIKE

Dated looks of the second stage

AQUALUNG CORE SUPREME | £230 (€298)



PRODUCT OVERVIEW

The Core Supreme is one of the newest arrivals in the Aqualung range of regulators, and while its looks might not set the world alight, it performed well against its peers and showed that the company can offer a true entry-level, cold-water-approved regulator for reasonable money. It is equipped with an environmentally sealed first stage, huge purge button, venturi lever, four low-pressure ports and two high-pressure ports.

TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The looks of the Aqualung Core Supreme received a lukewarm reception from the Test Team, with Matt describing it as looking 'alright', but regardless of whether the looks prove to be your cup of tea or not, there was no getting away from the high level of



performance that the regulator provided. It gave a smooth breathe in all positions, and benefitted from the Comfo-Bite mouthpiece. The monster purge got the thumbs up, as did the large venturi lever. Barry said it was a 'solid, entry-level regulator that worked well'.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★



WE LIKE

Price, comfort, performance, build quality



WE DON'T LIKE

Looks split opinion

EXCLUSIVE PACKAGES



Scubapro MK25/S600 Regulator with R195 Octo & Twin Console



RETURNING HOME AFTER A DAY'S DIVING: Seal it - first, make sure the dust cap is in place. Never allow water to seep into the first stage's inner workings. Give the reg a quick rinse with a low-pressure water hose to wash away any salt or sand. Then soak the reg in fresh water for ten to 20 minutes to loosen or dissolve any residual dirt.

OCEANIC ALPHA 9/CDX5 | £219 (€283)



PRODUCT OVERVIEW

The Alpha 9 is Oceanic's entry-level cold-water regulator, yet its performance belies its price tag. It comes fitted with a light, flexible braided hose (one of only two in this price range to do so), environmentally sealed first stage, large purge button, four low-pressure ports and two high-pressure ports. It also benefits from Oceanic's lifetime warranty and free annual service kits.



Mark noted that the second stage 'is free from any cracking resistance controls or venturi levers for newbies to unnecessarily fiddle with', and Matt said 'good school reg', though he thought the second stage felt a little 'cheap'.

TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The Alpha 9 second stage paired with the CDX5 first stage gave a good account of itself in this group test. Barry said it was 'good all-round' and that it 'did what it says on the box'. All the Test Team agreed that the mouthpiece was soft and comfortable, and the large, powerful purge also came in for positive feedback.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★



WE LIKE

Performance, looks, comfort, price



WE DON'T LIKE

Second stage was singled out as feeling a little 'cheap'



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- Dive 90, Cheltenham
- Diveline, Ipswich
- Scuba Zone, London
- DiveStyle, Wokingham, Reading
- Blue Oceanic Diving, Maidstone
- TAL Scuba, Christchurch





RETURNING HOME AFTER A DAY'S DIVING: During the soak phase, give the second stage a couple of gentle swishes (without depressing the purge button!) to get water flowing through the mouthpiece and exhaust tee. Then remove the reg and give it a final rinse with the low-pressure hose to get rid of any final detritus.

SCUBAPRO C350/MK11 £229 (€296)



PRODUCT OVERVIEW

The amalgamation of the Scubapro and SubGear brands is nowhere more welcome than in the budget regulator category, as the tried-and-tested Scubapro MK11 is teamed up with a brand-new second stage, the C350, which is heavily based on SubGear's former top-of-the-range reg.

It comes with a balanced diaphragm environmentally sealed first stage, cracking resistance control (the only one in this price bracket), venturi lever, large triangular purge button, four low-pressure ports (though two are classed as high-flow) and two high-pressure ports.



metal insert around the purge really makes it stand out from the crowd'. The powerful purge and smooth performance were all praised, as were the personal adjustment controls - Barry said 'performance can be fine-tuned, even with thick gloves on'.

TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The Test Team all thought that the C350 was the most pleasing to the eye, with Mark saying 'the

SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★



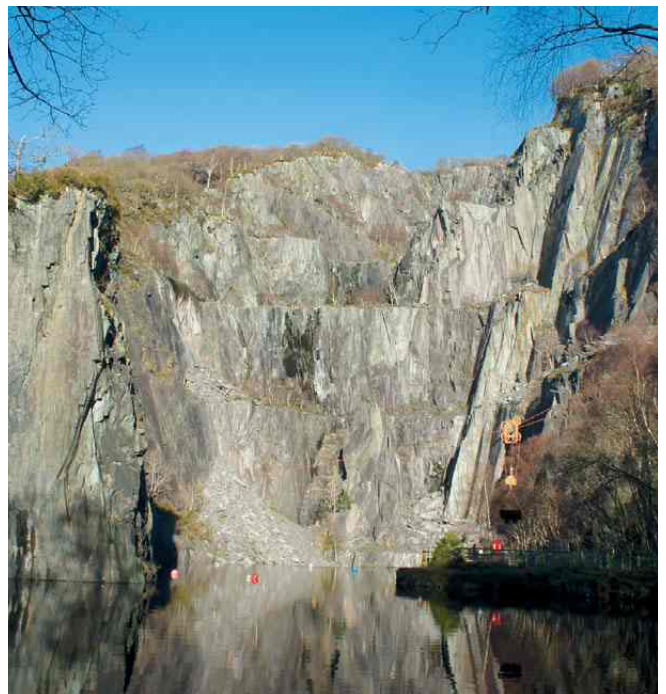
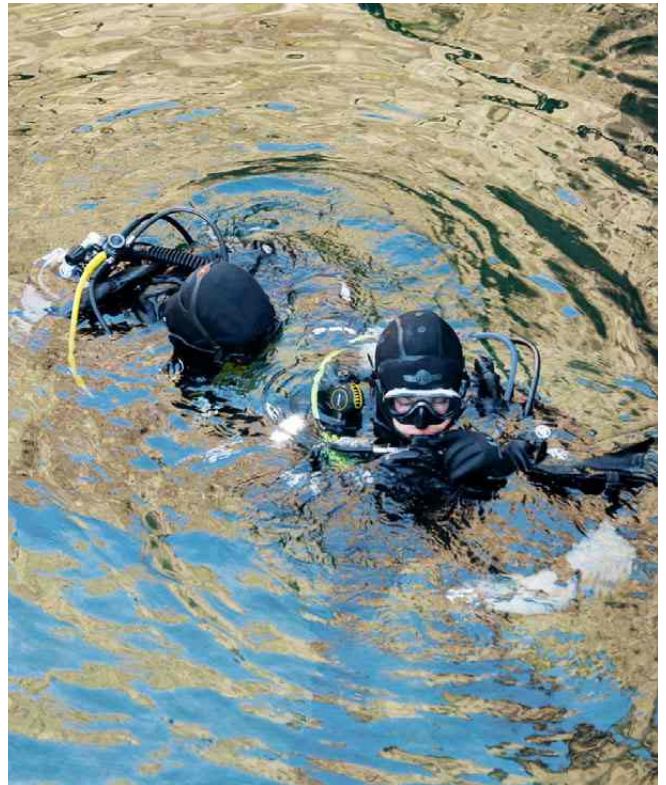
WE LIKE

Looks, performance, price



WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning



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RETURNING HOME AFTER A DAY'S DIVING: Give both first and second stages a gentle shake to clear any excess water from the yoke and exhaust tee. If there's a tank handy, run some air through the system to blow out any residual water. Then towel off the reg while inspecting for damage or wear, coil loosely, and lay it (not hang it) out of direct sunlight to dry thoroughly.

SEAC SUB MX100 | £234 (€302)



PRODUCT OVERVIEW

Seac Sub has invested heavily in its regulator line-up, and the new range does look and perform substantially better than previous models.

The MX100 features a balanced diaphragm first stage, venturi lever, light braided hose (one of only two here with this) massive purge button, four high-pressure ports and two low-pressure ports.

TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The Test Team has, in the past, been a little underwhelmed by Seac Sub regulators. They have not matched up well both in terms of design and performance with their rivals. However, the MX100 is a big leap forward. The looks will not be to everyone's taste, with Matt thinking the second stage looked a little 'cheap', but performance-wise it 'did the job',



according to Barry. The purge - which is the entire front of the second stage, worked well, and while the breathing sounded a little harsh, it still delivered. The mouthpiece came in for some criticism, as did the tiny venturi lever, which Mark said was 'hard to adjust with gloves on'.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★



WE LIKE

Performance



WE DON'T LIKE

Mouthpiece and tiny venturi lever



CONCLUSION. As we have found over the last few years, regulator technology has moved on, and now you'll find regs in the budget price category that would quite easily face off against mid-price models, both in terms of looks and performance. All the units here did what they were supposed to, with some excelling in certain areas, and it was interesting to note that even under the £250 threshold, a couple of regulators boasted braided hoses, and one even offered the full range of personal controls via venturi lever and cracking resistance knob.

A few really impressed us. The Aqualung Core Supreme was comfortable, provided a good breathe, and came in at a decent price. The Scubapro C350/MK11 was the only regulator that allowed the user to tweak the breathe using a venturi lever and a cracking resistance knob, and it was by far the best-looking reg in the test. However, the trusty, dependable Apeks ATX40/DS4 was unanimously lauded for its impeccable performance, landing it the Choice title. Ageing looks aside, the price is positively bargain-basement, so it also took the Best Value award, representing a clean sweep for the old timer.

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SCUBALAB TEST EXTRA

AQUALUNG I300 | £191 (€263)

Mark Evans: Aqualung is one of those premier equipment manufacturers that has had a gaping hole in its product line-up, namely dive computers. All that has now changed with the recent acquisition of a business with a long track record in making dive computers for other brands.

The i300 is the entry-level Aqualung computer, and while its price is wallet-friendly, the unit itself is anything but bargain basement. It boasts four operating modes - air, nitrox (up to 50 percent O₂), gauge (with run timer) and free dive (it can track calculations to allow switching between dive and free dive modes on the same day) - and has a user-replaceable battery (it also features data retention, meaning it will maintain settings and calculations between battery changes).

It has a button-operated backlight, audible alarms (with additional high-vis LED warning light for additional safety), optional deep stop with countdown timer, and a history mode that includes total number of dives, max depth, total dive hours and lowest temperature.

It features user-updateable software, which gives access to the latest features and upgrades (though you need the optional download cable for this), and can communicate with DiverLog software on Mac or PC platforms (purchase from www.ediverlog.com).

We took the i300 on a few dives in the depths of Vivian Quarry in the heart of Snowdonia while we were busy testing various side-mount systems and other Long Term Test products. The chunky strap fits easily around a drysuted wrist, and the display is large and clearly laid out. The backlight makes it even easier to see when the conditions get especially grim. The two buttons are simple to press even with drygloves on, and the menu navigation is an absolute doddle - a few minutes playing with it straight out of the box and you can comfortably bounce around the system.

The i300 comes in two colour schemes - black and grey, and black and blue. It also comes complete with manual, quick reference card, lens protector and battery compartment opening tool.

As well as the download cable, other options include mounting the computer in a two-gauge console or a three-gauge console.

www.aqualung.com/uk



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Canadian company Shearwater Research is lauded for its dive computers, and the new Perdix is sure to continue this good rep. This trimix-enabled computer can truly grow with you as your diving progresses, and is able to cope with up to five gases in both open circuit and closed circuit modes. It has a 2.2" full-colour display, with colour-coded warnings, digital compass, dual O-ring battery cap seal (it runs on a single AA battery), and bungee cord or elastic strap (comes with both). It has a thin, low profile and an aesthetically pleasing moulded case. I was impressed by the Petrel, and it will be interesting to see how this computer performs.

Mark Evans,
www.narkedat90.com

INFORMATION	
DATE ACQUIRED	FEBRUARY 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£636
NUMBER OF DIVES	0
TIME IN WATER	0 HRS 0 MINS

OCEANIC VEO 1



The trusty Veo 1 accompanied deputy editor Will Harrison and I up to Vivian Quarry on another testing session. I am quite taken with the simplistic design of the computer, which you can just stick on your wrist and go diving. Any menu navigation you do need to do is very easy due to the one-button layout, but otherwise you can just get on with your dive and know that it will show you the necessary information you need, without any superfluous extras. And I still can't get over that price - £135 represents great value.

Mark Evans
www.oceanicuk.com

INFORMATION	
DATE ACQUIRED	AUGUST 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£135
NUMBER OF DIVES	21
TIME IN WATER	19 HRS 40 MINS

ZEAGLE EXPRESS TECH

Dave Hope is winging his way to Grenada with the Express Tech as I type, but while we await his report, I thought I would focus on another feature - dual kidney pull-dumps. Now initially, I thought this was a bit of overkill, but underwater, it does mean that you can just reach back and vent regardless of which hand is unencumbered with a camera or other equipment.



Mark Evans,
www.zeagle.com

INFORMATION	
DATE ACQUIRED	SEPTEMBER 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£236
NUMBER OF DIVES	7
TIME IN WATER	6 HRS 15 MINS

URSUIT FIR VEST

After graciously letting Barry loose in the Ursuit vest, I got my hands on it for a few dives - and what a revelation. After dives in Capernwray and Vivian, where temps dropped to 4 degrees C, I was kept as warm as toast, and thanks to my torso being well-heated by the vest, it also helped resist the cold affecting my fingers. The controls are easy to use, and because it isn't bulky, it can fit under layers of undersuits with ease. A must for cold-water divers.



Mark Evans
www.liquidsports.co.uk

INFORMATION	
DATE ACQUIRED	DECEMBER 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£300
NUMBER OF DIVES	5
TIME IN WATER	4 HRS 50 MINS

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SEAC SUB F1 S



The F1 S fins are a good-looking piece of kit, and the dual material of the blade is aesthetically pleasing as well as being designed to offer up maximum thrust for effort. One of the main things I was pleased to see was the inclusion of a rubber strap with a giant-sized fin loop as standard. Spring or rubber straps make such a difference to getting your fins on and off, particularly when you are encased in a drysuit, and these work extremely well. Even the fattest fingers will fit through this loop!

Mark Evans
www.seacsub.com

INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	JANUARY 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£125
NUMBER OF DIVES	2
TIME IN WATER	1 HRS 45 MINS

ROBIN HOOD WATERSPORTS X-FLEX TECH

As the water and land temperatures have been heading steadily south into low single digits, I have been having a hard time persuading my warm-water-loving wife to don her test X-Flex Tech and venture into UK waters, but I actually think she is starting to see the attractions of drysuit diving. Previously, she always felt restricted and cumbersome in a drysuit, but thanks to the custom two-piece undersuit and the flexible nature of the drysuit itself, she says that she doesn't have that same feeling. I reckon I might have to lend her the Ursuit FIR Vest if I am going to get her into water that is just above freezing, though...



Mark Evans,
www.roho.co.uk

INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	OCTOBER 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	from £829
NUMBER OF DIVES	5
TIME IN WATER	4 HRS 20 MINS

BARE X-MISSION



Having raved about the BARE X-Mission's fit and comfort in the last issue, I'll continue on a similar theme this month and give you the lowdown on the SB System undersuit. Ultimately, you can have the best-fitting suit on the market, but if your undersuit isn't up to task, then your dive is probably going to suck - particularly after 50 minutes in 4 degrees C water, which is exactly the temperature Mark and I faced on a recent trip to Snowdonia. If it weren't for my fingers, which only had 5mm neoprene gloves for protection, I could have dived for a great deal longer - my core never felt cold and I was comfortable. Once out of the water (also 4 degrees C), I stripped to the mid-layer and stood in the wind. The double layer system held firm and kept me toasty.

Will Harrison,
www.baresports.com

INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	NOVEMBER 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£1,330
NUMBER OF DIVES	9
TIME IN WATER	6 HRS 55 MINS

AQUALUNG PRO

The Aqualung Pro BCD has come to the end of its Long Term Test stay, and it is safe to say that on the dozen dives it went into the water with a Test Team member, it performed well. The pockets are huge and easy to access, the jacket is robustly constructed and very comfortable, the power inflator is efficient, and the whole rig looks more expensive than it is. Would have been nice to have had integrated weight pockets, but this is an entry-level BCD and something has to give to get to this price point.

Mark Evans
www.aqualung.com/uk



END OF TERM

INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	JULY 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£245
NUMBER OF DIVES	12
TIME IN WATER	9 HRS 35 MINS

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The UK has a rich mining heritage, and as **IAN FRANCE** explains, these long-forgotten sites make a perfect playground for suitably trained divers

Photographs by D'ARCY FOLEY AND PAUL MARVIN



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The UK has a mining history stretching back thousands of years - back in prehistoric times, man mined metals, right through to the industrial revolution, which saw mining take on industrial proportions. Much of this evidence is still very visible today, from scars in the landscape to disused buildings and workings. The UK mining industry is far smaller today, but once entire communities existed around mining; and mining was more than a job, it was a way of life, and fundamental to the development of the UK as we know it.

The British Geological Society has been recording information on the number of mines and quarries in the UK since 1835, and the number of those recorded currently stands at 140,000. Although there is no record of the extent of underground workings, it is estimated that many thousands of miles of underground passageways exist. While the vast majority of the mines are closed to the public, sealed, or just too dangerous, many stunning mine sites do exist, if you know where to look...

Two such places have become popular over the years, one hidden away in the small market town and civil parish of Bakewell, in the Derbyshire Dales district of Derbyshire, well known for the local confection Bakewell Pudding (often mistaken for the Bakewell Tart). It is located on the River Wye, about 13 miles southwest of Sheffield. The other lies near the village of Glyn Ceiriog, the principal settlement of the Ceiriog Valley, in Wrexham County Borough in Wales. It is a former slate mining village; lying on the River Ceiriog, about six miles west of Chirk, just south of Llangollen.

"Mines offer divers an environment which combines the skills and hazards from both cave and wreck diving, allowing them to maintain overhead skills while in the UK"

Divers well-equipped with lights prepare to dive



Mines can be heavily coated with silt

Profile: Ian France

IANTD Instructor Trainer, Trimix, CCR and Advanced Cave Instructor. A passionate full-time technical diving educator, specialising in Mine, Cave and Trimix, with a wealth of experience in all kit configurations, OC and CCR. A regular instructor at TEKCamp, fundamental in the UKMC (www.ukmine-cave.com), and when not teaching, a very active diver exploring caves, mines, and the ocean. What really motivates Ian is the desire to pass on his experience and knowledge to students so that they too can discover the intrigue and delights of the underwater world. He believes that the wrecks, caves and unexplored areas of the world are accessible to all divers with the correct training, equipment and knowledge.

www.ianfrancetechnical.co.uk

Holme Bank Chert Mine, near Bakewell, was one of the last of two operational chert mines in Derbyshire. Chert is fine grained flinty silica, commonly found in veins of limestone. During prehistoric times, chert was shaped into tools as it was easily chipped producing sharp edges, but it was most useful for the grinding of calcined flint, which was used as a whitening agent in pottery production.

Operating for more than 200 years, commercial mining was in place by 1867, and by 1925 the mine employed 41 men, but decline was swift and this number halved only 20 years later. Holme Bank mine closed around 1960, but a block-making plant called Smith's Runners remained in operation using the remaining chert.

With a maximum depth of around 6m, and exceptional visibility, Holme Bank is a relatively straightforward dive. Consisting of three dive bases, two of which are useful, and 9 degree C static water, it makes an excellent training site.

Within the region of Glyn Ceiriog, slate mining has been going on for hundreds of years. The Cambrian mine started in the 1800s, and in its heyday employed up to 100 men. But after 1930 the industry went into serious decline, with the mine finally closing in 1947. The Cambrian mines are an impressive structure with miles of passageway still existing both above and below ground.

However, diving in Cambrian is a much-more-challenging endeavour - the access is tricky, with a steep, muddy slope to navigate. Once safely at the bottom, and only a short walk from the entrance, five dive bases can be found providing access to depths of 27m, in a chilly 8 degree C water. The mine contains huge chambers, abandoned pipe work, stairs to long forgotten destinations, and is a veritable rabbit warren of interconnected

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Good finning techniques
are essential

Picture: Paul Marvin

*"The mine contains huge chambers,
abandoned pipe work, stairs to long
forgotten destinations, and is
a veritable rabbit warren of
interconnected tunnels"*

tunnels. Alas, all the surfaces are covered with silt, and divers' exhaust bubbles loosen flakes of slate, creating a snowstorm type experience, meaning the journey back is in very poor visibility. This, combined with the walls' ability to absorb light from the most powerful of modern torches, makes for a dark and eerie dive.

Now, I am a technical cave diver; I dive and train in caves around the world, including here in the UK. So why do I dive mines? While the UK has many dramatic cave diving sites, the skills required are more akin to dry caving, with standard technical diver dress being inappropriate. Mine diving is different to cave diving, yet it is only different in the nature of the environment - caves have a distinctly different character to them. Caves are alive, crafted by nature, beautiful random shapes that have existed for thousands of years. Mines are manmade, crafted by man's desire to make a profit. They once bustled with the sounds of industry, their rich minerals used to power the destiny of the human race. But once they ceased to deliver a profit, they were stripped and abandoned, and are now lonely, eerie, decaying places - a stark contrast to the noise associated with mining - yet still steeped in human history.

Much of the techniques and technical diving equipment required are common, and cave-mine skills are very transferable. Mines offer divers an environment which combines the skills and hazards from both cave and wreck diving, allowing them to maintain overhead skills while in the UK. Mines are never blown out (although can be affected by heavy rainfall), so ideal when the UK seas are less forgiving; the water clarity can be that of tap water; access to some sites can be relatively straightforward; they make for ideal training environments. But mines can be formidable, dangerous places: visibility can be zero; sites can be prone to collapse; maze-like passageways and false floors can be unnerving; they are cold and often full of dangerous gases, known as damps; total darkness is not uncommon. Access also needs to be considered, most are on private land - the landowner and any restrictions need to be respected.

Is diving in mines exploration? Long dead miners have already trodden those paths but diving in these places for the first time, since the profit vanished and some abandoned levels flooded, there is still huge potential

to come across new, un-dived locations, see beautiful mineral formations, and overcome significant technical challenges, similar to diving a shipwreck for the first time - all this certainly leads to a sense of rediscovery, if not true exploration.

It's difficult not to be impressed, and even awed, by these manmade places: the effort, the mining techniques, the risk and often sacrifice of the men, women and children, that has gone into the construction of the chambers, the miles of tunnels, usually for very little reward. Many mining artefacts remain in the mines, safe from vandals and trophy hunters, and often lying where last used by the miner.

There are a number of groups of divers regularly researching and diving the UK's industrial past, and one of these is UK Mine Cave Diving & Exploration (UKMC).

The UKMC originally formed as a small group of like-minded divers, dedicated individuals who wanted to dive in UK mines to put their cave-diving skills and qualifications into practice. Some of these individuals went on to meet existing, and seasoned, UK cave and mine divers, and after a period of orientation to UK conditions, started to organise regular mine-diving trips. It became apparent that there were many isolated pockets of mine-diving activity across the UK, and there was a need to bring this community of divers together. We could then share knowledge and experience in an effort to make the diving community safer. As membership grew it became clear to the founding members that there was a need to formalise the group to move it forward. A proper framework would be needed, as well as proper insurance, and an improvement in landowner relationships would also be vital.

While this kind of diving isn't for everyone, with training, research and experience vital, mine diving can appeal to those with an interest in industrial archaeology or history, and provides a good alternative when the UK weather isn't playing ball. ■

References

1. *Directory of Mines & Quarries 2010*
2. *Classic Darksite Diving, M. Farr, 2013*

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Mark Evans: Sidemount is still the in-vogue style of diving, and the X-Tek sidemount harness from Scubapro is a well-thought-out and robust piece of kit.

Although sidemount originally developed through cave diving, it is now commonplace on wreck and reef dives across the globe. However, there is a vast array of styles within the 'art' of sidemount, with ways of mounting the dual cylinders on to the harness varying depending on how the user was trained or how they prefer to dive. The X-Tek has been constructed in a modular fashion, which means whether you use butt-plates, fixed waist-belt D-rings, single-bungee, etc, it can cater for you.

It is also available with two different size bladders - 25lb and 45lb - so you can select the size you require depending on where you are going to be diving.

There is plenty of adjustment in the harness - shoulder straps, waist belt and crotch strap can all be tailored to fit like a glove, which holds the backplate and wing rigidly against your body.

As with all sidemount rigs, don't expect to get it out of the box and go diving minutes later. The harness and wing need to be built and fastened together, and then you need to dial in the fit for you, so allow a couple of hours to get it all set up just right before heading for your nearest body of water.

Underwater, the system feels like an extension of your body, and everything just falls to hand, including the efficient power inflator. My test unit also came with the optional top cover, which just Velcros around the shoulder straps and is designed to increase the overall streamlining of the system.

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Tech Sidemount



Mark Evans: For the test dives on the X-Tek rig, I teamed it up with a set of sidemount regulators from Scubapro, comprising MK25 first stages and G260 second stages. The MK25 is the perfect reg for sidemount aficionados, as it is a high-performance unit and it offers multiple routing options, especially via the port out of the top of the turret. The G260 has that old-school appeal, performs admirably in all conditions, and can be configured with a left-hand or right-hand hose routing, so you can tailor it to your personal preference. I was taught with two right-hand regulators on my sidemount course, and the Scubapro regs both came left-hand routed, but I soon got my head around it and managed to get them set up in a steamlined fashion.



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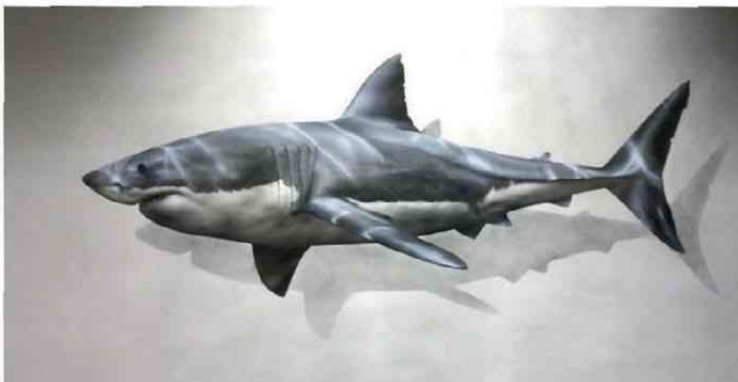


Dark water Gallery in Brighton's famous Lanes is the home of Nick Oneill Art.

Featuring the Work of British Marine life artist Nick Oneill and other guest Artists the Dark Water Gallery is the first gallery dedicated to marine life art in the UK . The Gallery stocks Everything from huge original artwork to prints , sculptures , T-shirts , jewellery and gifts so there really is something for everyone . It is a truly unique place to visit in Brighton and well worth a visit to see Nick's famous life size shark paintings !



The Dark Water Gallery is situated at 36 Meeting House Lane in Brighton and is open six days a week with two floors of Marine and wildlife art .



Nick is a British artist who specialises in contemporary marine and wildlife art .

Growing up among a family of divers, his passion for the sea and its creatures grew during holidays to destinations by the Red Sea, Caribbean Sea, Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

Nick's first diving adventures took place at an early age, allowing him to experience first hand the vibrancy and amazing textures of the magnificent fish. Although he had been snorkeling for years already, learning to scuba dive at age 11 allowed Nick to experience the unique effects of light streaming through water and the changes in colours when in deep water.

Nick's experiences and artistic talent allowed him to develop a unique style of painting which combines traditional painting techniques and skills learnt during his years as a custom painter for the motorsport industry. Nick is a self taught artist and believes that this has helped him to create his own style of painting and stand out from the crowd . Nick paints a variety of marine and other wildlife , including life size sharks on his signature black canvas and new precious and base metal leaf covered boards .

You descend quickly, fully equipped, ready for action and prepared to penetrate. It's your first time with this particular lady and you suddenly realise that in your rush for gratification, you may be missing out on so many things!

I discovered my love of wreck diving on my first UK boat dive. It's not that I hadn't enjoyed my initial diving experiences on a coral reef in Kenya, or beach diving from the South Coast of the UK, but descending into the darkness with a small torch beam to light the way and watching the wreck loom towards me as I got closer and closer was the first time I had experienced the adrenaline side of scuba diving. And I loved it!

I threw myself into UK wreck diving, exploring as many wrecks on the South Coast as I could, as well as other areas whenever I got the chance to travel a bit further. It wasn't long before I learnt the skills needed to make wreck penetrations and from then on I disappeared into every wreck I dived at the first opportunity.

Now, many years and hundreds of wreck dives later, I realise that I missed a lot on those early wreck dives. I was so keen to see the inside of the wreck that I couldn't tell you what it looked like from the outside. So how do you make the most of your wreck dives?

A lesson I learnt from one of my favourite skippers, Tim Allsop (also a very experienced diver and instructor), is that there are lots of benefits to learning about a wreck before you dive it...

Knowing the history of the wreck, what kind of vessel it was and the circumstances of it becoming a wreck are part of the 'story' and massively increases my interest in diving it. The dive becomes an exploration of the history of the wreck. Tim always told us what was known about the wrecks we dived, but also what wasn't known or hadn't been found out, so every dive felt like a wreck detective dive looking for clues that other divers had missed, or that may have been uncovered during recent weather events.

Knowing how and why the wreck sank, what the structure was and how it was damaged also helps you anticipate potential hazards, as well as plan your dive effectively.

Reports from other divers can also help paint the picture. The last time I dived with Tim he had logged several thousand dives in the area we were

Tech divers exploring a wreck



diving as well as having well over a decade (that I know of) experience skippering for divers on these sites - and his briefings are legendary. Not only does he tell you exactly where the shot will be when you descend, but will suggest the best route(s) to dive and tell you what you can see. The first time I dived one particular wreck I listened with some scepticism as he told us that swimming down on the starboard side of the wreck and then back up on the port side would mean that the current was never against us. I guess I had heard too many briefings where a 'drift' dive turned into a swim against current and had got into the habit of really only paying attention to depth, time and tide information. Anyway, our fantastic skipper was obviously used to this and stressed how carefully we should listen to him, which I did. We followed his briefing and I was amazed that the picture he had painted with his briefing was exactly what I saw. I spotted things I wouldn't have done otherwise and practically had a free ride around the wreck because the currents were exactly as we'd been briefed!

Okay, so I know that not every skipper is a diver and not every briefing, whoever gives it, will be quite like this one, but it taught me that a little bit of research - books, online and other divers - could help me build up this kind of information for every dive I planned. With small digital cameras increasingly popular and hundreds of diving videos posted on social media, you may even be able to watch a video of the wreck you want to visit to help prepare your own plan. The result of taking a little time to research my dives has been that now I always get the most out of my dives. This helps me avoid wasting time trying to work out where to go, what to see or even, where I am and this equals an increase in the amount of time I get to enjoy diving the wreck and, ultimately, more bang for my buck.

Tim even managed to turn me onto old wooden wrecks. I had previously dived a few on the South Coast and really wondered why I was diving over a few planks of wood and bumps in the sand... The first such dive Tim took us on he left another skipper in charge of the boat and laid us a route. The briefing explained what we would see if we followed his line, making sure that we all saw some of the main attractions, including big beautiful cannons. He then briefed us on the rest of the site, its layout and how to find the other major items. Finally, he laid down the challenge

"Knowing how and why the wreck sank, what the structure was and how it was damaged also helps you anticipate potential hazards, as well as plan your dive effectively"

Open-circuit techie admiring a huge prop



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Exploring the exterior of a purpose-sunk vessel

Vikki Batten

Vikki Batten is a Director of PADI's Technical Diving Division. She first visited the Isles of Scilly in 2000 and ran annual trips from her dive centre in Surrey, before joining PADI in 2010. The Scillies are one of her favourite places to dive in the world and although she knew what a great skipper Tim was, she didn't realise how much he had influenced her diving until she started writing this article - thanks Tim.

Tim Allsop and the other skippers at Scilly Diving shared so much of their own personal experience, knowledge and love of the area that I fell in love with it too.

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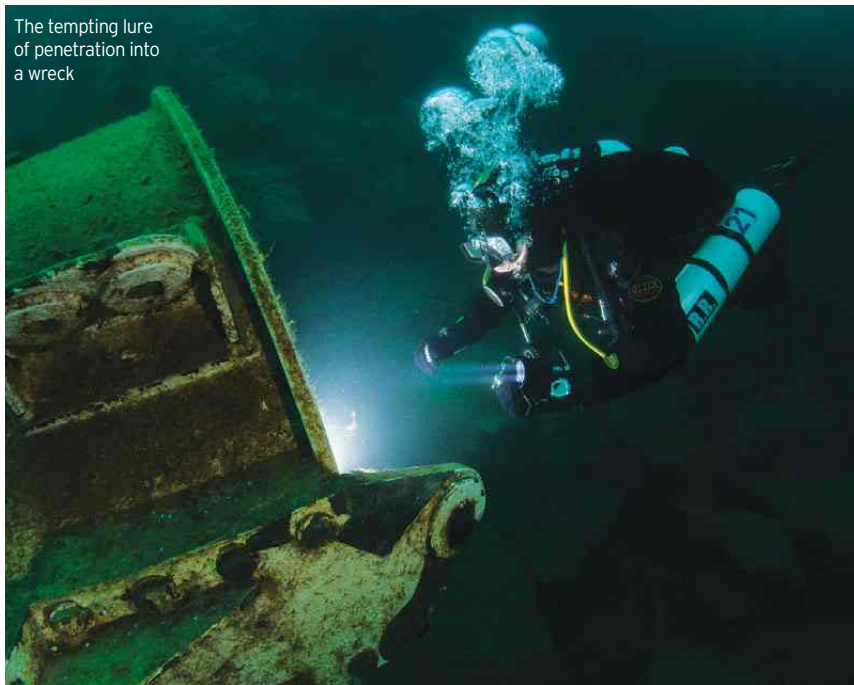
to find the things he hadn't marked. 'You're on', I and everyone else on the boat thought! By the end of the dive we had found everything, had an amazing time, seen the big picture of the site and my love and curiosity for this kind of site had been affirmed.

Several years later, on one of many return trips to the Scillies, we were incredibly lucky to get both the weather conditions and permission to dive one of the protected 'Association' wrecks. I had read about Admiral Shovel and the events that lead to the tragic wrecking of his fleet around the Scilly Isles - a fascinating story worthy of a Hollywood blockbuster. We dived the site with the utmost care, making sure we didn't disturb what was (and probably still is) an ongoing site for archaeological research. It was absolutely gobsmacking and ranks as one of my best ever dives, but I really don't think I would have enjoyed or appreciated it nearly as much before my 'training' and experience on other wooden wrecks.

This and my interest in cave diving lead to me another activity - wreck surveying. It's pretty easy to get a good overall view of a wreck in the crystal-clear waters of the Red Sea and similar regions. However, here in the UK that isn't always quite so easy and I found that sometimes, even though I had dived a wreck many times, I didn't really 'know' what it looked like. Photos of the wreck before it sank sometimes helped, as did drawings or photos of the wreck underwater. When I couldn't find anything about a wreck I dived frequently I decided to apply my surveying techniques to build up a picture. Of course, when you have a team of divers each surveying a small section, you can get a basic picture much more quickly. These days software apps can quickly convert your measurements into a picture of the site and underwater cameras can help with the details. There are lots of chances to join groups dedicated to archaeological research in the UK, or maybe you just want to survey a site you dive frequently so that you can show new divers what it looks like and where to go.

Of course, the natural progression from this is photography and videography. I am certainly no expert in this, being more used to being in front of the camera than behind it. Whichever side of the lens you prefer, I'm sure you know how difficult it is,

The tempting lure of penetration into a wreck



"It means that taking the time to learn about the outside of the wreck, its history and points of interest means that when I do go inside I have a better understanding of the layout and what I might find to look at"

especially in UK conditions. Photographers such as Leigh Bishop and Steve Jones achieve astounding results, dedicating themselves to their art. I'm not sure how they do it, but they manage to capture even more than the eye can see, as well as the amazing atmosphere that lures us back to these ships time and time again.

So, does all this history and surveying mean that I don't like wreck penetration anymore? No, of course not. It means that taking the time to learn about the outside of the wreck, its history and points of interest means that when I do go inside I have a better understanding of the layout and what I might find to look at. It means that I have already practised ascending and deco-ing from the site and know exactly what resources I will need and it means that I already have knowledge of tidal conditions, normal currents and any unusual water conditions - all a good idea when you are planning an overhead environment dive and don't want to exit to find that the slack is long gone and the tide is screaming.

So, if like I used to be, you tend to go straight for the hot spots, why not learn to tease, tantalise and learn all about the lady you want to explore, before giving in to the inevitable urge. ■



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TECH NEWS

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Everyone has to start somewhere. That's the mantra of this year's TEKCamp, which is aiming to broaden its appeal to welcome the 'tech petrified' to the event. TEKCamp 2016 takes place at Vobster Quay between 11-15 July 2016.

With the generous support of Apeks Marine Equipment, you'll no longer need to own your own twinset or side-mount rig to enjoy the award-winning TEKCamp experience. Apeks will be supplying a full set of backmount or sidemount gear for the 'tech curious' who have yet to invest in tech gear. You'll get to try both configurations and then choose which one you'd like to use for the rest of TEKCamp - at no extra charge!

"Dean Martin and the team at Apeks Marine Equipment have been an important part of TEKCamp since day one, so we're delighted to announce their sponsorship of this new TEKCamp experience. Apeks share our desire to make TEKCamp as accessible as possible by removing the hurdle of owning your own set of tech gear," commented TEKCamp organiser Tim Clements.

"Every technical diver has to start somewhere and one of the biggest choices that any budding tech diver has to make is their chosen configuration. Apeks have sponsored six entire sets of kit - both backmount and sidemount - which the 'tech curious' will be able to use throughout the TEKCamp week. All you'll need to bring along is your drysuit, fins and mask!

"Our expert instructors will guide you on your very first dive in tech gear and show you how to configure it for maximum comfort and safety."

Whether you have zero previous experience of tech diving - or indeed, tech equipment - or you're already an experienced open circuit or rebreather technical diver, TEKCamp prides itself on tailoring a personalised training package to suit the unique needs of individual attendees. From basic 'get yourself comfortable on a twinset' training right up to expedition-level stuff like habitats, survey skills and everything in between, TEKCamp really does have something for everyone. ■

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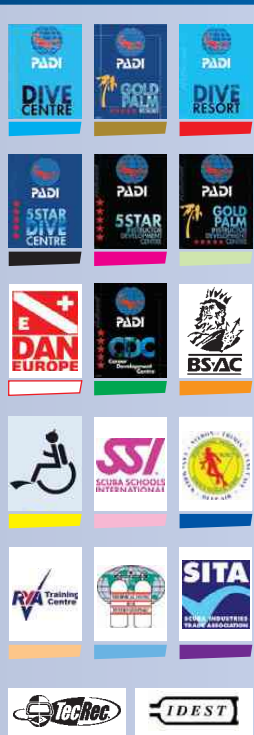
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AT.....Airport transfers
AYRD.....All year round diving
BH.....Boat hire
CAOS.....Compressed air onsite
CH.....Car hire
EA.....Environment activities
EH.....Equipment hire
ESI.....English speaking instructors
FCF.....Families catered for
LB.....Liveaboards
NDCF.....Non-divers catered for
OWs.....Other watersports
TD.....Tech diving
UWP.....Underwater photography

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Website: www.roho.co.uk

Opening Hours: Open Times: Mon, Tues, Weds, Fri - 9.15-6pm Thurs 9.15-8pm Sat - 9.15 - 5pm. OSS, OST, BS, IDEST, EH, Nitrox. PADI Dive Centre, BSAC Premier level. Training in our on-site heated pool and lecture rooms. Home of the renowned ROHO drysuits. Nitrox courses & fills. Gigantic 5000sq ft showroom fully stocked with dive watersports & snowboarding equipment. Friendly, helpful staff and instructors. Equipment hire.



IRELAND

CO CORK

OCEANADDICTS

Kinsale, Co. Cork, Ireland

Tel: 00353 (0)87-7903211

Website: www.oceanaddicts.ie

Email: anne@oceanaddicts.ie

Opening Hours: 9.00am to 6.00pm. Air to 300, PADI Resort, DAN, LB, ESI, ACC, AT, UWP, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox. Liveaboard and day-boat diving, groups and individuals welcome, friendly atmosphere, wrecks and reefs, great photo opportunities, courses available, live the adventure on Ireland's South Coast.



CO DONEGAL

MEVAGH DIVE CENTRE LTD

Milford Road, Carrigat, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Ireland

Tel: 00353 749154708

Mob: 00353 8765 90264

Email: reception@mevaghdiving.com

Website: www.mevaghdiving.com

Opening Hours: 9am to 7.30pm. Air to 300 Bar, PADI 5★ Dive Centre, EH, ESI, TD, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox, Tri Mix. Mevagh Dive Centre PADI 5★. All levels of diving including Technical diving. 11m catamaran with dive lift. Accommodation with Swimming pool.



NORTHERN IRELAND

COUNTY DOWN

DV DIVING

138 Mount Steward Road, Newtownards, Co. Down, BT22 2ES.

Tel: 02891 464671/861686

Fax: 02891 464671

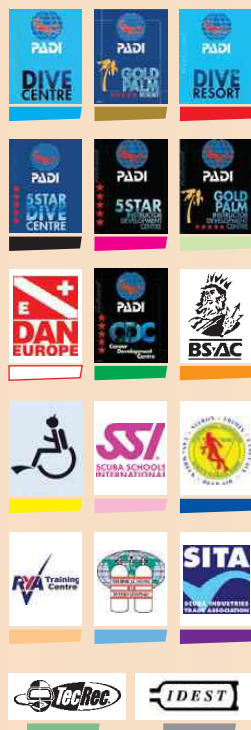
Email: info@dvdiving.co.uk

Website: www.dvdiving.co.uk

OSS, OST, BS, EH. DV Diving offer one of Europe's most comprehensive ranges of scuba, technical & commercial diving and powerboat training courses - for the complete beginner through to instructor development for the most experienced professionals



DIRECTORY KEY



SHOP KEY

OSS.....Onsite servicing
OST.....Onsite testing
BS.....Testing to British Standards

OVERSEAS ABBREVIATIONS

ACC.....Accommodation
AIP.....All inclusive package
AT.....Airport transfers
AYRD.....All year round diving
BH.....Boat hire
CAOS.....Compressed air onsite
CH.....Car hire
EA.....Environment activities
EH.....Equipment hire
ESI.....English speaking instructors
FCF.....Families catered for
LB.....Liveaboards
NDCF.....Non-divers catered for
OWS.....Other watersports
TD.....Tech diving
UWP.....Underwater photography

PORTSTEWART

AQUAHOLICS DIVE CENTRE

14 Portmore Road, Portstewart

Tel: 28 70832584

Email: dive@aquaholics.org

Website: www.aquaholics.org

Opening Hours: 9am to 5pm. Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5★ CENTRE. NITROX, TRIMIX. EH, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Offering the full range of courses from Beginner to Trimix. Diving the spectacular clear water of the North Coast from Rathlin Island to Malin Head. ■ ■ ■



OVERSEAS DIVE OPERATORS

AUSTRALIA

LIVEABOARD



Australia - Cairns

Spirit of Freedom

www.spiritoffreedom.com.au

Passengers.....26	Elec.....240
Cabins.....11	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....37m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....N

LIVEABOARD



Australia - Cairns, Queensland

Spoilsport

www.mikeball.com

Passengers.....29	Elec.....240
Cabins.....15	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....30m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Aluminium	CCR.....Y

BALI

AQUAMARINE DIVING - BALI

2A Jalan Petitenget, Kuta, Bali, 80361, Indonesia

Tel: +623614738020

Email: info@AquaMarineDiving.com

Website: www.AquaMarineDiving.com

Opening Hours: We are open 7 days a week and from 7am to 7pm. Air to (BAR) 200. EH, LB, ESI, EA, AIP, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Nitrox. 5★ Dive Resort. AquaMarine Diving - Bali is dedicated to ensuring you experience Bali's best diving, from Day Trips to fully-inclusive underwater macro-photography Safaris, Intro-diving and Snorkelling, PADI courses to Divemaster and many Specialties (including the Manta Ray Awareness Specialty). ■



CAYMAN ISLANDS

SUNSET HOUSE - GRAND CAYMAN'S HOTEL FOR DIVERS BY DIVERS

390 South Church Street

P.O. Box 479GT Grand Cayman,

Cayman Islands

Tel: 1-345-949-7111 Fax: 1-345-949-7101

Email: keith.sahm@sunsethouse.com

Website: www.sunsethouse.com

Opening Hours: 7:00 - 17:30 (Dive Centre Hours). Air To 200 Bar. Stingray City and ex-USS Kittiwake Adventures. PADI 5★ IDC. EH, ESI, EA, Acc, FCF, AT (with packages), AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS (with packages). Full-Service dive operations located at Sunset House. Recreational boat dives. Incredible shore diving. Nitrox. Cathy Church. U/W photo centre. 53 Rooms for accommodations. Bar, restaurant onsite. Stepping out of my room, catching that breath of fragrant tropical breeze, gazing into the alluring blue water...I found the essence of Sunset House. ■ ■ ■



CYPRUS

ALPHA DIVERS

2 Pyla Gardens,
Dhekelia Road,
Larnaca, Pyla Tourist Area,
7081, Cyprus

Tel: +357 24647519

+357 99866383

Email: info@alpha-divers.com

Website: www.alpha-divers.com

5 star PADI Instructor Development & Tec Rec Centre, BSAC Tec Centre and Seamanship Centre offering the very highest in course from beginner to Instructor.



CYDIVE DIVE CYPRUS

20, Myra Complex 33,
Poseidonos Ave 1,
Paphos 8042,
Cyprus.

Tel: 00 357 26 934271

Email: info@cydive.com

Website: www.cydive.com

PADI. The First PADI 5★ Career Development Centre & Centre of Excellence in Cyprus. CAOS, EH, CH, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, ESI's, EA's, BH, AYRD, UWP, OW's, NDCF. Fantastic Location, an exciting programme with 2 Boat Dives & Daytrips Daily. Instructor programmes 4 times a year. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■



LARNACA DIVE-IN

HTTC Ltd (Hyperbaric Therapy Treatment Ctr)
Poseidonia Medical Centre
47a Eleftherias Avenue,
Aradippou,
Larnaca,
CYPRUS 7102

Tel: 00357 24 252501/24 hr

Emergency Diver Help Line 99 518837

Fax: 00357 24 252502

Email: info@hbocyprus.com

Website: www.hbocyprus.com

Opening Hours: 9-5 Mon - Sat.



24/7 Emergency Diver Response. Air to 232 Bar. If you are concerned or feel that you have unusual signs or symptoms after a dive please always get it checked. We have a 24/7, 365 days service with a full Hyperbaric Medical team on standby at our 14 man fully computerized, HAUX 2200 Starmed Unit. We are the Preferred Provider for IDAN, UK Armed Forces, US Armed Forces, NATO and many more. We offer Direct Insurance billing for all treatments. Also Dry Dives to 40 metres, PADI Chamber Specialty Courses, DAN In-Chamber Tender Courses, DAN Chamber Operator Courses, DAN Consumer an Instructor Courses to all Levels. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

EGYPT

LIVEABOARD



Egypt, Sharm El Sheikh

VIP One

www.vipone.com

Passengers.....16	Elec.....220
Cabins.....8	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....29m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Wood	CCR.....N



EAGLE DIVERS

Ocean Club Hotel,
23 City Council Street,
Hadaba,
Sharm el Sheikh

Tel: 002 01200001590

002 01200001591

Email: info@eagle-divers.com

Website: www.eagle-divers.com

Opening Hours: 8.00am - 6.00pm

PADI 5★ resort & TecRec Centre.

Nitrox. Air to 220 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCF, CAOS. Providing first class personalised service in one of the worlds top diving destinations.

We pride ourselves on making your Red Sea holiday the best it can be. ■ ■ ■



EMPEROR DIVERS

15 New Kawthar, Airport Road,
Hurghada, Egypt

Tel: (+20) 122 234 0995

Email: info@emperordivers.com

Web: www.emperordivers.com

Opening Hours: See website.

EH, LB, ESI, TD, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCF. Nitrox. PADI 5★ Year-round diving: the Maldives and Red Sea: El Gouna, Marsa Alam, Hamata and Sharm El Sheikh and Emperor liveaboards. Day diving, dive courses, resort packages. ■



LOOKING TO ADVERTISE YOUR DIVE CENTRE OR LIVEABOARD?

OVERSEAS DIVE OPERATORS

ELITE DIVING'S DIVERS UNITED

Uni Sharm Hotel, Sharm Elysees St, Um El Sid Hill, Hadaba, Sharm El Sheikh
Tel: 0020 1224 308 780
Email: info@elite-diving.com
Web: www.elite-diving.com
Opening Hours: 8.00am to 19.00pm
 Air to 220 Bar. Divers United PADI 5 Resort, Elite Diving. BSAC Diver Training Center. EH, LB, ESI, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS. NITROX, ATOL Bonded through UK Tour operator. British Owner managers, offering Daily Boat Diving on some of the best reefs in the world, House reef, PADI & BSAC courses, Liveaboards, Special excursions. ■ ■ ■

OCEAN COLLEGE

Naama Bay Hotel, Naama Bay, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt
Tel: 0020 1228075516
Email: info@ocean-college.com
Website: www.ocean-college.com
Opening Hours: 0800 – 1700.
 Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5★ IDC, Nitrox, ATOL Bonded. EH, ESI, EA, AIP, FCF, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Ocean College dive centre's are located at the Naama bay hotel, the Hilton Waterfalls and the Sensori resort. ■ ■ ■

RED SEA DIVING COLLEGE

Sultana Building, Naama Bay, South Sinai, Egypt
Tel: 0020 69 3600145
Email: info@redseacollege.com
Website: www.redseacollege.com
Opening hours: 8am - 9pm.
 Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Nitrox, National Geographic. PADI 5★ CDC. Multi Award winning centre offering all courses from entry level to professional. Conducted from a stunning beach-front location, boasting the best facilities in Sharm. ■

SHARKS BAY UMBI DIVING CENTRE

P O Box 275, Sharks Bay, Sharm el Sheikh, South Sinai, Egypt
Tel: +20 122 714 2029 +20 69 3600942
Email: info@sharksbay.com
Website: www.sharksbay.com
Opening hours: 8am to 6pm Mon - Sun. Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Nitrox, PADI 5★ and SSI Dive Centre. Sharks Bay Umbi Diving Village combines Bedouin style, warm hospitality and modern facilities. You really will come as a guest but leave as a friend. ■

SINAI COLLEGE - DIVING CENTRE

Sharm Inn Amarin, Hadaba, Sharm El Sheikh South Sinai 60907, Egypt
Tel: +201154055100
Email: info@sinaicollege.com
Website: www.sinaicollege.com
Opening hours: 7.30am till 7pm every day of the year. Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCF, COAS. Nitrox, PADI Dive Centre. We are an European run and managed dive centre based in Sharm El Sheikh with a friendly and professional atmosphere. We provide daily diving, mini safaris and liveaboards. ■

FUERTEVENTURA

DEEP BLUE DIVING S.L

Barcelo el Castillo, Caleta de Fuste, Fuerteventura, 35610
Tel: +34 606 275 468 or +34 928 163 172
Email: info@deep-blue-diving.com
Website: www.deep-blue-diving.com
Facebook: Deep.Blue.Diving.Fuerteventura
Opening Hours: All year 9am-5pm
 Air to 200. PADI 5★ GOLD PALM IDC CENTRE & IE LOCATION. EH, ESI, AIP, ACC, FCF, AYRD, UWP, NDCF, CAOS. WIFI, Equipment Washing and Storage Rooms. Discover Scuba to Instructor. All year round, water front location, small groups, 20-25m visibility. Exclusive dive sites, after dive sector. ■

GRAN CANARIAS

BLUE WATER DIVING

Holiday Club Puerto Calma, Avenida Joaquin Blanco Torrent 2, City: Puerto Rico, Mogan State, Las Palmas, 35130, Spain
Tel: +34602080208 / +34633963248
Email: info@divinggrancanaria.com
Website: www.divinggrancanaria.com
Opening Hours: 9am until 6pm Monday - Sunday. Air to 200 bar. EH, ESI, Acc, AYRD, NDCF, CAOS. PADI 5★ Dive Centre. All year round diving, boat and shore dives. Ideal for all level of divers. Special offers for groups, families and dive packages. Divemaster internships available. ■

GREECE

CRETE UNDERWATER CENTER

Mirabello Beach Hotel, Agios Nikolaos 72100 Crete, Greece.
PO Box 100
Tel/Fax: 00 30 284 1022 406
Mobile: 0030 6945 2444 34 / 0030 6944 1268 46
Email: info@creteunderwatercenter.com
Website: www.creteunderwatercenter.com
 PADI Resort D.C., Day Boats/ Servicing/ Accommodation/ Technical/ IANTD/ PADI/BSAC ResortCenter/Air /Nitrox/ Trimix/ KitionSale. Based within a hotel complex directly on the beach, we provide a great variety of diving services for Beginners through to Advanced and Technical Divers. As a well equipped resort and diving centre, we tailor packages to suit your individual or group needs. ■

NERO-SPORT DIVING CENTER

Limni Keri, Machairado, Zakynthos, 29092
Tel: 0030 269 502 8481 / 0030 698 566 6645
Email: dennis@nero-sport.de
Website: www.nero-sport.de
Opening Hours: Open 9-18h (all year except 15.01.2017 - 28.02.2017).
 Air to 200 Bar. PADI DIVE CENTRE, IAC 5★ EH, ESI, Acc, AT, FCF, AYRD, UWP, NDCF, CAOS. Free childcare. 2-5 trips a day. Day trips. Night diving. Own accommodation. Snack bar. Great family offers. Special group offers. Diving all year round. We are SSI Dive Center too. It's our 30 year anniversary in 2016 ■

DIVING CENTER TURTLE BEACH

Limni Keri, Zakynthos, Greece
Tel: 0030 6944 375597 / 0030 26950 49424
Email: infokerttravel@gmail.com
Website: www.diving-center-turtle-beach.com
 PADI DIVE CENTRE, CMAS, SSI, ACC, BH, CAOS, EH, ESI, FCF, NDCF. Dive packages. Special offers for groups and families. Great accommodation and diving packages. ■

GALAPAGOS

LIVEABOARD

San Cristobal, Galapagos
M/V Galapagos Sky
www.galapagosky.com

Passengers.....16	Elec.....110/220
Cabins.....8	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....30m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....N

HONDURAS

UTILA DIVE CENTRE/MANGO INN

Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras
Tel/Fax: (504) 24253327
Email: info@utiladivecentre.com
Website: www.utiladivecentre.com
www.goproutila.com
Opening Hours: 7am to 7pm
 Air to 220 Bar. PADI Career Development Centre and IANTD facility. Nitrox, Trimix, Rebreather friendly, National Geographic Facility. EH, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CAOS. PADI certification courses from beginner to Instructor (monthly PADI IDC's) with diving packages and accommodation. The island of Utila offers spectacular Caribbean diving and Whale sharks. ■ ■

INDONESIA

BIG BUBBLE DIVE

Turtle Beach, Gili Trawangan, Lombok NTB, Indonesia 83233.
Tel: +623706125020 +62811390969
Email: info@bigbubbl diving.com
Website: www.bigbubbl diving.com
Open: 8am to 7pm daily all year round
 Established in 2001 by UK Owner Anna Walker, The crystal clear waters (up to 40m visibility) will ensure you see the very best of the aquatic life that diving in Indonesia has to offer. ■

BLUE MARLIN DIVE

Gili Trawangan, Gili Meno, Gili Air, Senggigi, Lombok, Indonesia.
Tel: +62 (0) 370 632424 Fax: +62(0) 370 642286
Email: info@bluemarlinlive.com
Website: www.bluemarlinlive.com
 PADI 5★ Premier IDC Centre. Acc., AT, LB, ESI, EA, BH, AYRD, UWP, OW, NDCF, TD, EH, CH, AIP, CAOS, FCF. The Gili Islands most professional & friendly 5★ IDC Centre (established 16 years). Spectacular world class ocean diving. Ocean front restaurant, bar, night club & freshwater pool. Full retail dive shop on site. DM internship programmes. Full technical diving facility offering TDI & IANTD. Blue Marlin has it's own luxury liveboard offering trips throughout the Indonesian Archipelago. Packages available. ■ ■ ■

TWO FISH DIVERS

One operator/three tropical-island resorts:
Bunaken Island, North Sualwesi Lembeh Straits, North Sualwesi
Lembongan Island, Bali
Tel: 0062-811-432-805
Email: info@twofishdivers.com
Website: www.twofishdivers.com
 Air to 200 bar. PADI 5★ IDC. Nitrox, EH, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCF, CAOS. Two Fish Divers is owned and run by Tina and Nigel from UK. Each of their three tropical-island resorts offer a friendly and relaxed atmosphere with some of the best diving in Indonesia:
 1) Bunaken Island, North Sulawesi - the award-winning reefs of Bunaken Marine Park.
 2) Lembeh Straits, North Sulawesi - the muck-diving capital of the world.
 3) Lembongan Island, Bali - home of the mola-mola's and manta's of Bali.
 All dive resorts are PADI 5★, have European management, max 24 divers, small dive groups, and a friendly and personal service. Organise a trip to one of more of these resorts, or book an Indo Dive Safari with all three resorts! ■ ■ ■

LANZAROTE

MANTA DIVING LANZAROTE

Juan Carlos 1, No.6, Local 5, Puerto del Carmen
Tel: (0034) 928 516815
Mobile: (0034) 649 121142
Email: info@manta-diving-lanzarote.com
manta-diving-lanzarote-val@hotmail.com
Skype: manta-dive-centre
Website: www.manta-diving-lanzarote.com
 Opening hours: Mon-Sat 8.30-5.30pm all year round. Air to 200 Bar. PADI IRRA RESORT CENTRE, BSAC RESORT CENTRE. OSS, ACC, AT, AYRD, BH, CAOS, CH, NDCF, EA, EH, UWP, ESI, FCF. PADI. Courses & Specialties, Discover Scuba & Snorkelling. Fully equipped, spacious centre, 150mtrs from best sites in Lanzarote. Group Rates All level of divers welcome. NITROX. ■ ■

SAFARI DIVING LANZAROTE

Playa de la Barrilla 4, Playa Chica Puerto Del Carmen, Tel: 0034 928511992 or 0034 646752512
Email: enquiry@safaridiving.com
Website: www.safaridiving.com
 PADI, PADI 5★ Centre, BSAC, PADI Premier Centre, NAUI, SAA, ACC, AT, LB, ESI, EAS, BH, AYRD, UWP, OWs, NDCF, ATOL, TD, CAOS, EH, CH, AIP, FCF. SSI & RYA. We are a PADI dive centre. BSAC Premier Centre and Seamanship Centre. SSI Diver Training Centre. British owned, beach based diving centre, established for over 18 years. Spectacular Ocean diving all year round which include reefs, drop offs, wrecks etc to suit all levels of diver and the complete beginner! Special offers available for dive packages for shore, night and boat dives. ■ ■ ■

MALDIVES

DIVING & SAILING PVT. LTD

Vivanta by Taj Coral Reef Resort, Hembadhu, North Male Atoll, North Male Atoll, 0000, Maldives
Tel: 00960 7487511
Email: diving.vivanta@gmail.com
Web: www.blueinmaldives.com
Opening Hours: 08.30 - 12.30, 14.00 - 18.00.
 EH, ESI, EA, AYRD, UWP, BH. PADI 5★ Gold Palm Resort. The major appeal of our Dive Centre is the wreck, which was sunk in 1988, to attract marine life. ■

EMPEROR DIVERS

15 New Kawthar, Airport Road, Hurghada, Egypt
Tel: (+20) 122 234 0995
Email: info@emperordivers.com
Web: www.emperordivers.com
Opening Hours: See website.
 EH, LB, ESI, TD, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCF. Nitrox, PADI 5★ Year-round diving: the Maldives and Red Sea: El Gouna, Marsa Alam, Hamata and Sharm El Sheikh and Emperor liveaboards. Day diving, dive courses, resort packages. ■

SUB AQUA DIVECENTER

Sub Aqua Dive Center - Thailand/Oman/ Maldives, Angaga, Thulhagiri & Furaveri
Tel: +498938476959
Thailand: +66800523101
Email: info@subaqua-divecenter.com
Website: www.subaqua-divecenter.com
Opening Hours: 08.00 - 19.00 EVERYDAY.
 PADI 5★ SSI. EH, LB, ESI, EA, FCF, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Nitrox. Located in Phuket (Thailand), Salalah (Oman) and Maldives. Thailand liveaboard experts. Quality services and full range of diving courses and facilities. Multi-lingual diving Instructor teams. ■

MALTA

DIVE DEEP BLUE MALTA

9/11 Annanija Street, Bugibba, St Pauls Bay, Malta SPB 1320
Tel: 00 356 21 583946
Mob: 00 356 99 868957
Email: dive@divedeepblue.com
Website: www.divedeepblue.com
Opening Hours: 8am till 6pm.
PADI 5★ IDC. EH, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox / Trimix. Facilities include: Dive Shop, Private parking, swimming pool, sun deck, gas filling/blending station, equipment rental/sales, drying and storage areas, toilets/showers, A/C class rooms, technical facility, CCR support.

DIVESHACK SCUBA SCHOOL

14a, Qui Si Sana, Seafront, Sliema, SLM3111, Malta
Tel: 00 356 213 8558
00 356 9999 3483
Email: info@divemalta.com
Website: www.divemalta.com
Opening Hours: 7 Days a week from 08.00 till 18.00 (17.00 in winter).
PADI 5★ IDC, National Geographic and TecRec Facility. Seafront Location. Resident Course Director. All PADI Courses Taught. Rebreather Friendly. Escorted Dives from Shore/Boat round Malta, Gozo and Comino. Fully Stocked Shop. Operating from Comino May to Oct. Nitrox, Trimix, National Geographic. Speciality side mount and Tec side mount. Acc, AIP, AT, AYRD, BH, BS, CAOS, CH, EA, EH, ESI, FCF, NDCF, OSS + OWS, OST, TD, UWP.

DIVEWISE

Westin Dragonara Resort, Malta
Tel: (+356) 21 356 441
Email: info@divewise.com.mt
Website: www.divewise.com.mt
Opening Hours: 7 days a week from 9am till finish.
Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5★ CDC Centre. Nitrox, Trimix, Boat Diving, Day trips. EH, ESI, TD, EA, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS
PADI's No1 centre in Malta offering all courses but specialising in Technical diving & Instructor level.

ADVENTURE DIVING MALTA

Adventure Diving Malta, Triq-il Luzzu, Qawra, Bugibba, Malta, SPB1981
Tel: 00356 9964 4095
00356 21574526
Email: adventure.diving.malta@gmail.com
Website: www.adventuredivingmalta.com
Opening Hours: Daily 08.00-18.00.
Air to 220 Bar. PADI 5★ EH, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox Available. We also have mixing station for Nitrox/Trimix. Family orientated, rebreather friendly on site private pool, toilets and showers (Hot), sun deck, tec/tec side mount.

GOZO AQUA SPORTS

Gozo Aqua Sports, Rubat Road, Marsalforn, Gozo, Malta, MFN 9014
Tel: 00356 21563037
Email: dive@gozoaquaquasports.com
Website: www.gozoaquaquasports.com
Opening Hours: 7 Days a week 08:00 – 18:00.
Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5★ IDC - DSAT TECREC centre & BSAC Resort, ESI, TD, Acc, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox and Trimix Available. Technical & Rebreather Diver Support. Free Wi-Fi, Free Tea/Coffee/Water, Rinsing/Drying/Storage facilities, Wreck, Boat, Cavern, Digital Photography, Drysuit, Enriched Air, Equipment Specialist, Multilevel, Naturalist, Navigation, Night, PPB, Oxygen Provider, Search & Recovery, Project AWARE Fish ID Specialities.

ORANGESHARK H2O LTD

Ramla Bay Resort, Marfa Bay, Mellieha, MLH 1700, Malta
Tel: 00356 79030049 / 00356 23561950
Email: steve@orangeshark.eu
Website: www.orangeshark.eu
Open: 08:00 to 17:30.
Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5★ IDC Centres. EH, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox.

PARADISE DIVING

Paradise Diving, Paradise Bay Resort Hotel, Cirkewwa, MLH9068, Malta
Tel: 0035621574116
0035621524363
Email: alison@paradisediving.com
Website: www.paradisediving.com
Open: May to October 08.30-17.00 Daily.
November to April by advance reservation.
Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5★ RESORT. EH, ESI, EA, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox. Three summer boat dives daily, Malta, Gozo, Comino. No boat surcharge! Private beach location, Cirkewwa. PADI courses. Free group places. Free transport, Mellieha, Bugibba, Qawra.

SEA SHELL DIVE COVE

Marfa Road, Mellieha, Malta
Tel: +356/21522595 / +356/21521062
Fax: +356 2152 1062
Email: info@seashell-divecove.com
Website: www.seashell-divecove.com
EH, Nitrox, ESI, TD, CAOS, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF. Family run dive centre. Technical diving & courses. Escorted dives from shore/boat Malta, Gozo, Comino. Wreck dive specialist. Latest equipment for hire & for sale.

MEXICO

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Solmar V
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www.solmarv.com

Passengers.....22	Elec.....110/220
Cabins.....12	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....34m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

LIVEABOARD

Nautilus Belle Amie
Mexico
www.nautilusbelleamie.com

Passengers.....30	Elec.....120
Cabins.....17	Courses.....N
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....41m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

LIVEABOARD

Nautilus Explorer
Mexico
www.nautilusexplorer.com

Passengers.....25	Elec.....120
Cabins.....13	Courses.....N
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....35m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

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Passengers.....18	Elec.....240
Cabins.....9	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....31m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

LIVEABOARD

Solitude One
Malakal, Palau
www.solitude-one.com

Passengers.....22	Elec.....220
Cabins.....10	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....52m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

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Hull.....Steel	CCR.....N

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PAUL ROSE

Paul is the Vice President of the Royal Geographic Society. For 10 years he was the Base Commander of Rothera Research Station in Antarctica and was also the BAS Diving Officer. He presents television and radio programmes on the BBC.

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ASCENSION ISLAND – A SPECIAL PLACE INDEED!

I'm fresh back from Ascension Island, the diving gear is still in the bag, I've got a whopping pile of admin, the next trip is two weeks away and the trip was so good that it's impossible to focus on anything other than Ascension Island.

On my way to Antarctica I stopped in Ascension many times as it's the normal two-hour fuel stop between RAF Brize Norton and the Falkland Islands. Even though I was keen to get south and start the season I used to sit on that flight with my fingers crossed that we would have some technical problems or bad weather and be forced to stay overnight. Most of the flights went as planned which meant hanging around in the transit area soaking up the feeling of the wonderful warm ocean breeze before we started the second leg of our flight. But on one glorious occasion we got lucky and had to overnight which meant a short nap and a mad dash for the top of Green Mountain. The sounds of the bamboo trees, the warm rain, the evocative scents and bird calls were mesmerising. But

and even harder to not jump and then land on one. It's a beautiful moment and made even better that there is so little known about them: How did they arrive here? Are they thriving or on the edge of collapse?

I was bursting to dive and you can't beat a boat ride accompanied by dolphins and then rolling in and arriving alongside a shiver of juvenile Galapagos sharks, descending through schools of triggerfish, butterfly fish, damselfish onto pristine lava flows and coralline to join stacks of moray eels, scorpionfish and then trying to be patient enough to see the sand eels popping up.

We were keen to film more of the black triggerfish, sometimes called the 'Black Piranha of Ascension'. They are a defining fish on the island, seen on every dive and from the beaches, rocks and pier. It was easy to get a sense of their mass feeding frenzy as we just asked the local fishermen who were cleaning their tuna to throw the fish guts, skin and bones down to us as we snorkelled under

"We laid in the sand at night watching green turtles lay their eggs, walked the lava flows to find endemic shrimps, soaked up history and a sense of human endeavour at the top of Green Mountain and fell in love with the feral donkeys"

most of all it was the sense of place - this is a very special setting. I knew that I couldn't leave future visits to chance and somehow had to get back.

My trip last week was a reconnaissance for our expedition next year and we started with perfect timing for the famous land crab event. For the last million years, when Ascension rose up into the Atlantic, in time with the last quarter of the lunar cycle and neap tides, thousands of them travel from Green Mountain and the nearby hills to the coast to drop their eggs in the sea.

Standing on that beach at night, knee-deep in land crabs is a surprisingly moving experience. They walk about 7km from the hills and wait in small caves and overhangs until the right moment and then make a dash for the waves. They can't swim so it's all about careful timing as they drop their eggs into what they must feel is the perfect wave either by running across the sand or by perching on the cliffs. This celebration of life looks chaotic at first and if, like me, you are a bit spooked by spiders (and all things with lots of legs), then it's hard not to jump when they run across your feet

the pier. Great fun, but it's hard on my ears as they get bitten of course.

We laid in the sand at night watching green turtles lay their eggs, walked the lava flows to find endemic shrimps, soaked up history and a sense of human endeavour at the top of Green Mountain - imagine digging a tunnel through the mountain with shovels and pick axes to capture water - fell in love with the feral donkeys and particularly enjoyed working with the islanders and the brilliant scientists. A special place indeed!

Ascension Island is set to become a marine reserve as part of the Conservative Government manifesto commitment. Working alongside the Great British Oceans Coalition we'll be contributing exploration and science to help the government live up to its promise of a "blue belt of protected ocean round the UK's Overseas Territories".

As Charles Clover, Blue Marine Foundation chairman, said: "Ascension has been at the frontier of science since Charles Darwin went there in the 19th Century, so it is entirely appropriate that it is now at the centre of a great scientific effort to design the Atlantic's largest marine reserve."

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